THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

By

OLIVER OPTIC

WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES

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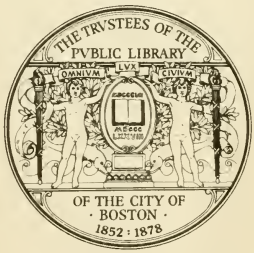

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THE BLUE AND THE GRAY SERIES

TAKEN BY THE ENEMY

WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES

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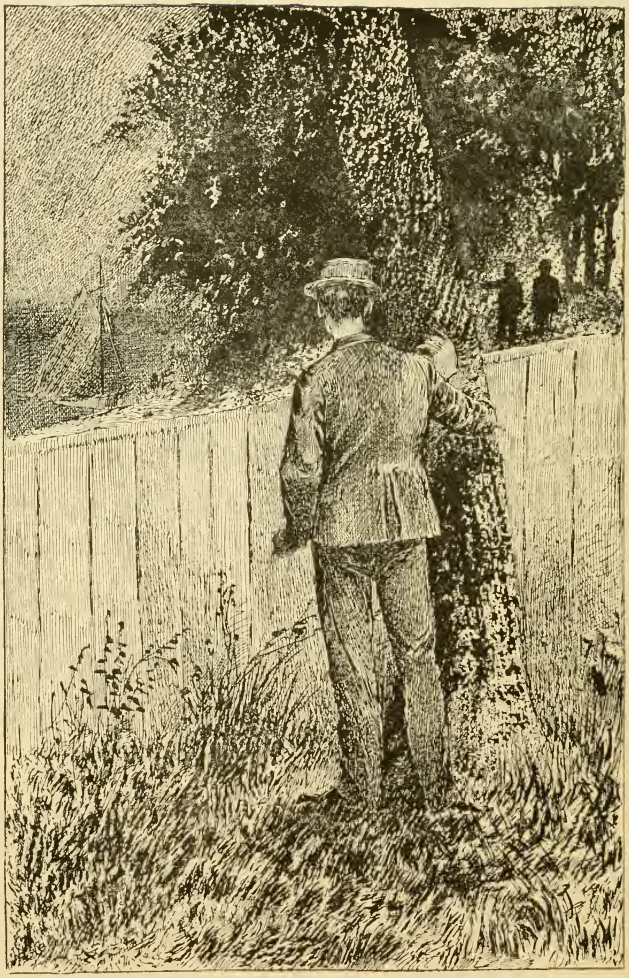

"He saw Two Men making their way through the Grove." — Page 28.

The Blue and the Gray Series

BY OLIVER OPTIC

Within the Enemy's Lines

The Blue and the Gray Series

WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

AUTHOR OF "THE ARMY AND NAVY SERIES," "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD," "THE GREAT WESTERN SERIES," "THE WOODVILLE STORIES," "THE STARRY FLAG SERIES," "THE BOAT-CLUB STORIES," "THE ONWARD AND UPWARD SERIES," "THE YACHT-CLUB SERIES," "THE LAKE SHORE SERIES," "THE RIVERDALE SERIES," "THE BOAT-BUILDER SERIES," "TAKEN BY THE ENEMY," ETC.

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WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES.

S. J. PARKHILL & CO., PRINTERS
BOSTON

A MON JEUNE AMI,

(QUE JE N'AI JAMAIS VU, ET QUE JE NE CONNAIS PAS,)

Monsieur Lucien Bing,

DE PARIS, FRANCE,

En Reconnaissance de la Bonté de son Pére,

Cette Historiette de la Guerre Civile en Amerique

Est affectueusement Dédié.

PREFACE

"WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES" is the second volume of "The Blue and the Gray Series." Like its predecessor, of course, its scenes are connected with the war of the Rebellion; and perhaps the writer ought to be thankful that he is not required in such a work to rise to the dignity of history, but he believes that all his events were possible, and that every one of them has had its parallel in the actual occurrences of the historic period of which he writes. In fact, some of the experiences of the actors in the terrible drama of a quarter of a century ago would pass more readily for fiction than for reality, and detailed on the pages of a story would be deemed impossible by the conservative reader.

The nation has passed out of its ordeal of fire, and an excellent spirit on the part of both parties to the great strife is still growing and strengthen-

ing, in spite of an occasional exhibition of folly on both sides on the part of those who have not outlived the bitterness of the past, and who probably will not outlive it. The time will certainly come when the memories of the conflict, the repetition of the stories of the war, and even the partisan praise bestowed upon the heroes of both sides, will excite no more ill feeling than does an allusion to the War of the Roses in England.

In this country the advocate of either side will tell his story, relate his history, and jingle his verse in his own way, and from his own standpoint. Those upon the other side will be magnanimous enough to tolerate him, at least in silence. Histories, romances, poems, and plays relating to the war, are produced in greater numbers as the gap between the days of battle and the days of peace widens; but the old fires are not rekindled, the old bitterness still slumbers, and the Great United Nation still lives on in perfect peace.

The author hopes he has done nothing on these pages to impair the growing harmony between the two sections which have happily become one, or to impregnate the minds of those who have been born since the strife ended with any of its

bitterness. He has endeavored to make as high-toned men on the one side as the other, with the same moral sentiment in the one party as the other, and to exhibit their only difference in the one great question of Union or Disunion.

DORCHESTER, May 2, 1889.

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WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES

CHAPTER I

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

"CORNELIUS!" exclaimed Captain Passford, as a young man of nineteen was shown into the library of the magnificent dwelling of the millionnaire at Bonnydale, on the Hudson.

"Cornelius Passford, Uncle Horatio," replied the young man, as the captain rushed to him and extended his hand.

"I think there can be no mistake about it; and I should have been no more surprised if Mr. Jefferson Davis had been ushered into my library at this moment," continued Captain Passford, still retaining the hand of his nephew. "I understood that you were a soldier in the Confederate army."

"I was a soldier; but I am not one just now," replied the visitor, with some embarrassment in

his manner, though the circumstances were strange enough to account for it.

"How are your father and mother and Miss Gerty, Corny?" asked the uncle of the visitor, giving the young man the name by which he was generally called both at home and in the family of his uncle.

"They were all very well when I left them," replied Corny, looking on the floor, as though he was not altogether satisfied with himself.

"Of course, you brought letters from your father and Gerty?"

"No, sir; I brought no letters," replied Corny, and, more than before, he looked as though he was not enjoying his present visit.

"No letters!" exclaimed Captain Passford, evidently surprised beyond measure at the apparent want of kindly feeling on the part of members of his brother's family in the South.

"Not a letter, Uncle Horatio," answered Corny, bracing himself up, as though he realized that he was not presenting a demeanor such as he thought the occasion required of him.

"This is very strange," added Captain Passford, with a cloud playing on his fine features.

"It is war between the North and the South, Uncle Horatio, and I suppose my father did not feel like writing any letters. Gerty never writes any letters if she can help it," Corny explained.

"But Gerty used to write to Florry about once a week."

"Did she? I didn't know it. She never would write to me when I was away from home," said Corny, who seemed to be very anxious not to say anything that was not consistent with the present situation, whatever it was.

"When I parted with my brother on board of the Bellevite, both of us shed tears as we realized that war made enemies of us; but each of us promised to do all he could for the other in case of need. I am very sure that there was not the slightest unkind feeling between us. Of course, I did not expect him to write me the war news, but I think he could have written a few lines without any allusion to the war," said Captain Passford, pained at this want of filial affection on the part of his brother.

At that moment the bell for tea rang, and the captain invited his nephew to the table with him. The host was saddened by the absence of news from

his brother, of any kindly expression from one who was of the same blood as himself. He was not quite satisfied with Corny's manner, or with the little he seemed to be willing to say about the rest of the family. It was certainly very strange that the young man should be there at all, and his awkwardness and confusion made the visit seem still more singular.

It was possible that the young man had just arrived and was fatigued by the trials and perils of his trip, for he must have come by some roundabout way; and very likely he felt nervous and uneasy in the midst of people who were loyal to the government and the Union. Captain Passford decided to say nothing more to his nephew at present as to the occasion and the manner of his visit to Bonnydale, and during the evening meal he avoided all allusion to the war, so far as it was possible to do so. Mrs. Passford and Florry received him very kindly, but following the example of the head of the family, they spoke only of domestic affairs, and of the relations of the two families as they had been before the war.

Between the brothers Homer and Horatio Passford, even from their early boyhood, a remarkably

strong fraternal affection had subsisted. Both of them were high-toned men, and both of them had always been faithful in the discharge of every duty to God and man. Each of them had a wife, a son and a daughter, and two happier families could not have been found on the face of the earth. They were not only devoted to each other, each within its own circle, but the two families were as nearly one as it was possible to be.

Captain Horatio had formerly been a shipmaster, and had accumulated an immense fortune. Homer was less fortunate in this respect, and his tastes were somewhat different from those of his brother. He wanted to be a planter, and with the financial assistance of his brother, he went into the business of raising cotton near Mobile, in Alabama. But years before the war, he had paid off every dollar of his indebtedness to Horatio, and had made a comfortable fortune besides. The two families had visited each other as much as possible, and the captain, with his little family, had been almost to the plantation in the Bellevite, the magnificent steam-yacht of the Northerner.

During the preceding winter, Captain Passford, his wife and son, had visited most of the islands of

the Atlantic; but the health of Miss Florry was considerably impaired, and the doctors would not permit her to make this sea-voyage, but recommended her to keep quiet in some southern locality. She had therefore passed the winter at Glenfield, which was the name of Homer Passford's plantation. On his return from this long cruise, the owner of the Bellevite obtained his first news that war existed between the North and the South from the pilot. The three members of the family on board of the steamer were greatly distressed over the fact that Florry was still at the home of her uncle in Alabama, within the enemy's lines.

Without going on shore, Captain Passford decided to arm his yacht, which was large enough for a man-of-war, and hasten to Mobile Bay to bring back his daughter. He was in doubt with regard to the political feeling of Homer, but believed that he would still adhere to the government and the Union. It was a part of his mission to bring his brother and his family to his own home at Bonnydale. Mrs. Passford was sent on shore in a tug, and Christy, the son, was to go with her; but the young man, just entering his

seventeenth year, protested against being left at home, and as the captain believed that a patriotic citizen ought to be willing to give his all, even his sons, to his country, the young man went with his father. The mother was as devoted to her country as the father, and terrible as was the ordeal, she consented to part with him for such a duty.

By an event fortunate for him, Captain Passford succeeded in obtaining an armament for his vessel, as well as an abundant supply of ammunition; and the vessel was refitted for the perilous service in which she was to be engaged. At Nassau, Christy made the acquaintance of a young man who proved to be of great service to the expedition, and the Bellevite reached her destination in safety, though not without some rather exciting incidents.

Captain Passford found that his brother was sincerely and devotedly attached to the Southern cause. They discussed the great question for hours upon hours, each striving to convert the other to his own views, but with no success on the part of either. Homer Passford was a religious man, conscientious in the discharge of every duty, and nothing less could be said of his Northern brother. In a short time the owner of the Belle-

vite found that he had fallen into a "hornet's nest," for the planter did not believe that he ought to allow the steam-yacht to be taken to New York to become a part of the navy of the Union. He declared his convictions to his brother, who was compelled to regard the planter as an enemy in spite of the relations subsisting between them. Both of them placed their duty to their own country above every other consideration.

Captain Passford was obliged to get his daughter out of his brother's house by stealth, and to make his escape with the Bellevite as best he could.

Major Lindley Pierson, in command of Fort Gaines, at the entrance to Mobile Bay, had permitted the steamer to pass, having been deceived by his younger brother. He had been a frequent visitor at the mansion of Homer Passford, attracted there, it appeared, by the lovely daughter of the planter's brother, remaining there for the winter. Perhaps on her account, perhaps with the fear that the Bellevite was not what she had appeared to be, he had gone to the vicinity of Glenfield to inquire into the mission of the steamer.

Homer Passford, acting upon his convictions, gave information which resulted in an attempt to

capture the Bellevite. Christy, not informed in regard to the plans of his father to depart at once in the steamer, was "Taken by the Enemy," and had some very stirring adventures in the bay. But the steamer escaped from the numerous enemies that awaited her, and Christy got on board of her at the last minute. The Bellevite ran the gantlet of the forts in a dense fog, and brought Miss Florry in safety to her home at Bonnydale.

Corny Passford, whose unexpected arrival at Bonnydale had excited the astonishment of his uncle, was a year older than Christy, and had enlisted in the Confederate service at the instance of Major Pierson. Without knowing anything in particular about the matter, his uncle believed, at his visit to Glenfield, that Corny was as earnestly devoted to the Southern cause as his father, judging entirely from the fact that he had enlisted as a soldier.

Corny had a good appetite, and a good supper was set before him. He ate like a hungry boy, and the fact that he was within the enemy's lines did not seem to have any influence upon him. His aunt helped him till he seemed to be filled to repletion, for she thought he must have been accus-

tomed of late only to the most indifferent fare. After supper, he followed his uncle back to the library; but he seemed less embarrassed than before.

"Where is Christy, Uncle Horatio?" asked Corny, as he seated himself in the library. "I have not seen him yet; and as I was away at the fort when you went to Glenfield, I did not see him then."

"I don't know where he is just now, though he is in or about the house most of the time," replied the captain. "Are you still in the army, Corny?"

"No, sir, I am here. I did not like the service very well, and I thought I should like the navy better. The reason why I did not like it as well as at first was because I was no longer in Major Pierson's battalion," replied Corny, looking at his uncle as though he expected a question from him.

"Then Major Pierson is no longer in the army?" added the captain.

"Oh, yes, he is; but I think he was the maddest man in the army soon after you left."

"Indeed! Why was he so mad?"

"Because he was removed from command of

Fort Gaines for letting you pass it in your steamer."

"Then he is still in the service?" asked Captain Passford.

"Yes, sir; he is a good officer, and he will make his way, if he was guilty of a blunder in letting the Bellevite pass the fort."

"Then you intend to be a sailor, Corny?"

"Yes, sir; in fact, I am a sailor now. I had been in your yacht so much that I knew something about the ropes, and I had no difficulty in getting transferred, as sailors were wanted more than soldiers," replied Corny, who seemed to be studying the figures in the carpet.

"But if you went into the navy, how do you happen to be in New York?" asked Captain Passford.

"I suppose you remember the Dauphine, which was fitting out when you were in Mobile Bay?" continued Corny.

"I heard the name, and was told that she was one of the vessels that tried to prevent the escape of the Bellevite."

"I was sent on board of her; but, in coming out of the bay, she was captured by a Federal

vessel, and sent to New York. I hid myself when the crew were taken off, and came in her here," replied Corny, still studying the carpet.

Captain Passford had not heard of the capture of the Dauphine. He was not quite satisfied with the story of his nephew. But he was obliged to go to the city, and he handed the guest over to his wife and daughter. Corny wanted to see Christy, and Mrs. Passford had begun to be uneasy that he did not return at dark. Corny went out to find him.

CHAPTER II

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

THE Bellevite lay in the river, off the estate of Captain Passford, though at a little distance below the mansion, from the windows of which she could not be seen. Corny walked down the avenue and over the hill, in the direction of the anchorage of the steamer. The boat-house was near the mansion, and to the float attached to it a variety of small craft were made fast. But the water was not deep enough there for the Bellevite. Corny had been to Bonnydale, and passed many weeks there, so that he was familiar with the localities.

As he passed the boat-house, he noticed that the Florence, which was Christy's favorite sailing craft, was not at her moorings, and he concluded that his cousin was away in her on some excursion. When he reached the boundary line of the estate, he discovered the sailboat with her bow on the beach, though her mainsail was still set. A

gentle breeze was blowing, with which the Florence could make good headway; but there seemed to be no one on board of her. Corny watched her for some time, waiting for the appearance of Christy. It was not an easy matter to climb the high fence which bounded the estate, and the planter's son could hail the boat, and be taken on board of her as soon as she got under way again.

But Christy did not appear, and it was getting darker and darker every minute. Something must have attracted the attention of the skipper on shore, and he had doubtless landed. But while Corny was waiting for his cousin, he saw two men making their way through the grove on the other side of the fence towards the river. One of them he recognized, and gave a peculiar whistle, which drew the two men in the direction from which it came.

"Is that you, major?" asked Corny, in a low tone.

"Hush! You are a simpleton, Corny!" exclaimed one of the men, as he came up to the palisades of the fence. "Didn't I tell you not to call me by name?"

"I didn't call you by name," replied Corny, smartly.

"You called me major, and that is about the same thing," added the speaker on the other side of the fence.

"The woods are full of majors now, both in the North and the South, and no one knows you especially by that name. But I will remember in future, Mr. Mulgate," replied Corny.

"That sounds better, Neal. If we lose the game it will be by your blundering," continued the major, or Mulgate, as he preferred to be called on the present occasion.

"I suppose you have no talent for blundering, Mulgate; and that is the reason why you happen to be here at the present moment," retorted Corny, not at all pleased with the speech of the other.

"None of your impudence, Neal!" said Mulgate, sharply.

"If you lose the game, you say that it will be by my blundering, Mulgate," continued Corny. "That makes it seem as though I was to bear the responsibility of a failure; and I don't like the looks of things. If I am to be responsible for a failure, I ought to have something to say about the manner of conducting the enterprise."

"Shut up, Neal! We have no time to talk

nonsense of that sort. I am to conduct the enterprise, and you are to obey my orders. That is the whole of it," replied Mulgate, impatient at the position taken by the young man. "You are still under my command, and you will obey me or take the consequences. Now to business: what have you learned?"

"Nothing at all," answered Corny, rather sullenly.

"What have you been about? Haven't you discovered anything?"

"Nothing at all; I have but just arrived here. I took supper with my uncle, and told him the fish story you invented for me."

"Did he believe it?"

"I don't know whether he did or not; but he and the rest of the family treated me very handsomely, which made me feel meaner than a dead catfish."

"Never mind your feelings; you are here to assist in a great enterprise, and you are expected to do your duty to your country without regard to your own notions. Report what you have done."

"I haven't done anything but introduce myself into the house, and explain how I happen to be

here," replied Corny, as he proceeded to give the details of his meeting with his uncle.

"Is Miss Florry at home?" asked Mulgate, in a more gentle tone, as though he had a deeper interest in the direction he had indicated.

"She is at home, and was at the supper table with us."

"How does she seem to be?" asked the stranger.

"First rate; she is as jolly as though no one ever heard of such a thing as war," replied Corny, with enthusiasm.

"Did she say anything about her stay at Glenfield?" inquired Mulgate, whose interest seemed to mount to the pitch of anxiety.

"Not a word; she did not even hint at Glenfield, or anything connected with it," answered Corny; and, after the sharp tones of the other, he seemed to take pleasure in thorning him with negative answers.

"Did she say anything about me?"

"Not a word."

"Didn't she mention my name?"

"She did not."

"Didn't she ask about my health, or want to know where I was?"

"Florry did not allude to you in any manner. If she wanted to know where you were, she did not say a word about it to me," replied Corny, in the most decided tones.

It was still light enough to see that there was something like a frown on the brow of Mr. Mulgate. He had evidently believed that the daughter of the millionnaire of Bonnydale was interested in him, and his inquiries indicated that he expected her to ask about him; but she had not made the remotest allusion to him. Besides, she was as jolly as she had been at Glenfield, when war was a matter of the future, which few believed would ever be realized. She had not grown thin and pale during her absence from him, and she did not appear to be wasting her sweetness in pining for him.

"What in the world are you talking about, Mulgate?" suddenly demanded his companion on his side of the fence. "I thought we were here for business, and you are talking about some girl."

"She is the lady of whom I spoke to you; she spent the last winter with her uncle at the Glenfield Plantation. I am interested in her," replied

Mulgate, as though he had given a sufficient excuse for the questions he had put to Corny.

"Are we to capture her and take her back to the State of Alabama?" demanded the other, who seemed to be a gentleman of forty at least.

"I don't know; that depends; but, Captain Carboneer, I hope you will be my friend in this little matter," added Mulgate.

"I don't know anything about the little matter; but I am not willing to jeopardize the enterprise that brings us here to help you out with a love affair," replied the older gentleman. "There will be time enough for you to look for a wife after the war is over, and you have more time to attend to the affair."

"Mr. Mulgate, I should like to know something more about your intentions before we go any farther," interposed Corny, in a tone so decided that Mulgate had to listen to him, especially as he had obtained so little sympathy from the elderly gentleman.

"Speak quick then, for we have no time to spare," added Mulgate.

"Do I understand from what you have said that you intend to take Florry Passford back to

the South with you?" asked Corny, with his teeth closely pressed together, so that it was rather difficult for him to speak intelligibly.

"I answer, as I did before, that I don't know what I shall do; that depends," replied Mulgate evasively.

"Depends upon what?"

"I have no time to discuss that matter now," added Mulgate, turning to his companion.

"But I have time to say that I will ruin the whole enterprise if you mean to commit an outrage such as you appear to have in your mind," replied Corny, as vigorously as though he had been the military equal of the one he had called "major" by accident.

"Do you mean to be a traitor to your country, Neal?" demanded Mulgate angrily.

"Neither to my country nor to my uncle."

"Your uncle is a Yankee, and is doing all he can to subjugate the free South. He has no rights which we are bound to respect," said Mulgate fiercely.

"This will never do," interposed Captain Carboneer; and this may or may not have been his real name. "We are getting into a disagreement at the very first step of our enterprise."

"I don't know you, Captain Carboneer, but I wish to be understood as meaning every word I have said; and I will wreck this enterprise, if I am shot for it, rather than allow my cousin to be carried off in connection with it," protested Corny stoutly. "I will do my duty faithfully; but I will not assist in robbing my uncle of his daughter."

"You are quite right, young man; and I would rather be sent to the fort as a prisoner of war than take part in such an enterprise," added Captain Carboneer, in mild but forcible tones.

"You astonish me, captain!" said Mulgate. "Why do you talk about an outrage? I claim to be a gentleman, and to be above any such villany as you and Corny suggest. I do not propose to rob Captain Passford of his daughter. What I may do depends — depends upon the consent of the lady. If she is willing to go with me" —

"She is not willing to go with you; and she never will be willing to go with you," Corny interposed. "I don't know what you are thinking about, Mr. Mulgate; but Florry cares no more about you than she does about Uncle Pedro, my father's house-servant. She saw you both at Glenfield, and I can't tell which she likes best."

"We had better drop the subject," added Captain Carboneer.

"Drop it, then," replied Mulgate sullenly. "Get over the fence, Corny. Nobody is using that sailboat, and we may as well take it for a while."

CHAPTER III

THE DIGNIFIED NAVAL OFFICER

Corny climbed over the high palisade fence, with the assistance of Mulgate, and the party walked to the sailboat at the beach below. By this time it was dark, though the gloom was not very dense under a clear sky.

"Do you know anything about this boat, Corny?" asked Mulgate, as the trio approached the handsome craft, for such she was beyond a doubt.

The crusty tones of the speaker indicated that he had not yet recovered from the set-back he had plainly received in the late conversation, though he denied that he had any evil intentions in regard to Miss Florry.

"I do; I know all about her," replied Corny.

"Well, why don't you tell what you know?" demanded Mulgate.

"What do you wish to know about her?" in-

quired Corny, who was disposed to maintain his equality in spite of the military rank of his companion, which he had incautiously betrayed in the beginning.

"Whose boat is it?" asked Mulgate.

"She belongs to my cousin, Christy Passford."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Was he at the house when you were there?"

"He was not; and his mother had become rather anxious because he did not return to supper," replied Corny, becoming a little more pliable.

"This is a rather large boat, Captain Carboneer," added Mulgate, as he surveyed the trim sloop. "She is rather too large for our purpose."

"She will answer very well," replied the captain, as he applied his shoulder to the stem of the craft to ascertain how heavily she rested upon the beach. "Now, do you know whether there is any person on board of that steamer?"

"Of course, I don't know anything about it," said Mulgate.

"I am sure I don't," added Corny.

"I sent you up here to ascertain all about the Bellevite," continued Mulgate, rather sharply.

"I have not had time to find out anything," Corny explained, with some indignation in his tones.

"Corny has done as well as he could in the time he has had to do it in," interposed Captain Carboneer. "I think you are inclined to stir up bad blood with this young man, Mulgate. It appears now that you have a purpose of your own to accomplish, and that Corny will not allow you to carry it out."

"My first purpose is the same as your own," replied Mulgate.

"You admit that you have a second object; and I cannot tell when you will decide to make it your principal purpose," added Captain Carboneer. "I am not satisfied with the situation. I have done everything I can to accomplish our patriotic object. You endanger it by your crusty manner to this young man, who seems to be willing to do his duty; and he is in a position to be of great service to our enterprise."

"If you think it is necessary, I will take off my cap to this young man," said Mulgate, with a sneer in his tones.

"Be reasonable, Mulgate."

"What can I do more than I have done?" demanded the military gentleman, as his title indicated that he was.

"The first thing to do on your part is to renounce this idea of taking a lady passenger with you in the steamer," replied Captain Carboneer, in a very decided tone. "Women are not permitted on board of naval vessels, especially in time of war."

"I don't think I have any idea to renounce," muttered Mulgate.

"You certainly hinted that you desired to take a lady on board, and convey her to our destination," said the captain, rather earnestly.

"Not against her will, as you and Corny will have it," protested Mulgate.

"Do you renounce that plan or that idea, whatever it may be?"

"I do not renounce it. If the lady is willing to go with me, as I believe she will be, I know of no reason why she should not go as a passenger," argued Mulgate.

"I think we had better abandon the enterprise in the beginning, for I think we can be of more service to our country at liberty than within the

walls of Fort Lafayette," added the captain, with not a little disgust mingled with his indignation.

Whatever his object in visiting this locality, he was clearly a high-toned gentleman, and the idea of prosecuting a love adventure in connection with what he regarded as a highly patriotic duty was repulsive to his nature. He found by trial that the Florence was not grounded very hard on the beach, for the tide was rising, and he drew the boat farther up from the water, as he turned to walk away from the spot.

"Am I to understand that you retire from this enterprise, Captain Carboneer?" asked Mulgate.

"Am I to understand that you renounce your scheme to carry off a woman as a part of the enterprise?" demanded the captain.

"I do not renounce it, though I have no intention to carry off a woman, as you put it. The most I have asked is that she be permitted to go as a passenger of her own free will," replied Mulgate.

"She never will go with him of her own free will," interposed Corny.

"I will not have a woman on board of the

vessel, whether she goes willingly or otherwise. Do you renounce that scheme entirely?"

"I think you are driving me into a small corner, Captain Carboneer."

"After what you have said before, I think I am fully justified in what I require. With your private affairs, I have nothing to do. If you choose to marry this young lady, I have nothing to say about that; but no woman can be a passenger in a war vessel under my command. After I have landed you at Bermuda or Nassau, I shall not attempt to run the blockade, which is now enforced, in order to land you and the lady. Besides, we may be in action at any time after we get under way."

"Then if I do not yield the point, you intend to leave me to carry out this enterprise alone?" demanded Mulgate.

"In that case, I wish to go with you, Captain Carboneer," added Corny, with emphasis. "But I want it understood that I shall not leave Bonnydale without telling my uncle to look out for his daughter."

"Then you mean to be a traitor, Corny?" said Mulgate angrily.

"Call it what you like."

"All this is absurd, Mulgate," interposed Captain Carboneer. "Without my resources, you can do nothing at all, and it would be foolish for you to attempt the capture of the vessel. You are not a sailor or a navigator, and you could do nothing with the vessel if you succeeded in getting her to sea."

"I have no doubt I could find a hundred men in New York, including half a score of navigators, to assist me in this enterprise," replied Mulgate.

"I have another steamer in view, though the Bellevite is vastly superior to anything I know of in speed and general fitness. Do as you think best, Mulgate; and I shall be able to explain in a satisfactory manner my failure to obtain this vessel."

"The fault will be mine, I suppose," muttered Mulgate.

"The court-martial will decide that point," replied the captain.

Mulgate seemed to be buried in his own reflections, no doubt suggested by the last remark of the other. Possibly he considered that the failure of such an important enterprise because he had in-

sisted upon bringing a lady into the affair would not sound well at home. Whatever he was thinking about, he was greatly agitated, and Captain Carboneer walked in the direction of the road, half a mile from the river. He had no time to consider the matter: he must yield at once, or abandon the scheme.

"I will do anything you ask, Captain Carboneer!" he shouted, forgetting, in his excitement, the demand for secrecy.

The naval officer, as his conversation indicated that he was, turned and retraced his steps to the beach. He did not seem to be at all excited because his associate had changed his mind, for in his judgment it would have been worse than madness for him to persist in his intentions.

"I have stated the case as I understand it, and I have nothing more to say, Mulgate," said he.

"I renounce my scheme, and I will not ask that the lady be a passenger even to Bermuda or Nassau," replied Mulgate, though not without a considerable display of emotion.

"Very well; that is enough. Nothing more need be said about your purpose, since you have renounced it. Now we will visit the Bellevite,

and learn what we can in regard to her," said the naval officer, in his usual quiet manner, and whether he was a Confederate or a Unionist, one could hardly have failed to be impressed by his dignified deportment.

At the request of Captain Carboneer, Mulgate climbed to the forward deck of the Florence. She was twenty-eight feet long, and her deck covered more than half of her length. She had a very large cabin for a boat of her size, which was fitted up with berths, with a cook-room forward of it, for Christy Passford was often absent a week in her.

"I think Corny had better go back to the house, and keep an eye on Christy, so as to make sure that he does not disturb us," suggested Mulgate, as the planter's son was about to go on board of the yacht.

"I think we shall want him, and he had better be with us," replied the captain, as one would speak when he expected to be obeyed.

Corny climbed up the stem of the Florence. He had never seen the captain before, and had not even been informed who and what he was; but he appeared to be a more important person than Mul-

gate, and he did not wait for the latter to argue his point. He had sailed in the Florence very often, and he knew all about her. He took a boat-hook, and planted its point on the beach, in readiness to shove off.

"Not yet, Corny," said the naval officer, as he sprang lightly to the deck of the sailboat. "Let us see where we are before we do anything."

Captain Carboneer seated himself on one of the cushioned seats in the standing-room, and looked about him. A steamer towing a multitude of canal boats was approaching, and he waited for it to pass. Then no steamer or other craft was to be seen on the river.

"So far as I have been able to discover, there are only two men on board of the Bellevite, and I think we have not a moment to lose," said the naval officer, when he saw that the river was clear of everything that might interfere with his plans. "But we must go on board of her, and make sure of everything before we commit ourselves."

"As you said, Captain Carboneer, I am no sailor; and you don't think of taking the steamer out of the river alone?" added Mulgate.

"I have not come here on a fool's errand, Major

Pierson," replied the captain. "We are alone now, and we may call things by their right names."

"But I don't care to have my name used in this vicinity," interposed this gentleman, when addressed by his own name.

"Your wish in this respect shall be respected, Mr. Mulgate. I was about to say that I had a ship's company all ready to take possession of this craft, to handle her at sea, and even to fight a battle if necessary."

"But where are your ship's company?" asked Mulgate, as he wished still to be called.

"I will produce them at the right time. Now you may shove her off, Corny," added the captain, as he took the wheel.

CHAPTER IV

CORNY PASSFORD PLAYS ANOTHER PART

Captain Carboneer brought the Florence about, and headed her across the river. The Bellevite was moored a short distance from the estate down the stream.

"I have been up here before to-day," said the naval officer, as the boat moved away from the shore, assuring him that no one could be near enough to hear what he said.

"We only reached New York yesterday, and I don't see how you can have picked up a ship's company in that time," replied Mulgate.

"I sent the men before I came myself. I have stationed them in various places on the river, where I can get them when I want them; and I shall want them before the sun rises to-morrow morning," replied the captain.

"To-night!" exclaimed Mulgate, who seemed to be astounded at the revelation.

"Yes, to-night; in a few hours from now. I have obtained all the information I could in regard to the steamer, and what we do must be done at once. The Bellevite, as they call her now, has not yet been handed over to the government, though she has been accepted. They are waiting for something, though I don't know what, and she may be sent to the navy yard to-morrow; and then it will be too late for us to do anything."

"But to-night — that is rather hurried," added Mulgate, musing.

Very likely he was thinking of the beautiful Miss Florry in the elegant mansion a short distance up the river. Without a doubt he was Major Pierson, since the naval officer had addressed him by this name and title. He had often met the young lady at Glenfield Plantation, and possibly his sudden visit to the North had not been without some thought of her. However it may have been with her, he was at least very much interested in Miss Florry.

The fact that she was a "Yankee" did not make her less beautiful, and it did not make her any the less the daughter of a millionnaire. No one could say that he was mercenary, however, and no one

could say why he was not as deeply interested in the daughter of the planter, for she was hardly less beautiful, though her father was not considered a millionnaire, to say nothing of a ten-millionnaire. Major Pierson did not tell what he was thinking about; but he was certainly astounded and badly set back when the naval officer intimated that the capture of the Bellevite might be undertaken that night.

"You can see for yourself that we must strike at once, or there may be nothing to strike at," replied Captain Carboneer.

"But we shall have no time to work up the case," suggested the major.

"The case is all worked up, and there is nothing more to work up," replied the captain, as he headed the boat for the steamer.

Major Pierson said no more, but he was as much dissatisfied with the promptness of the naval officer as though he had said it in so many words. It would be difficult to imagine how he expected to manage his case with Miss Florry, since he could not enter the house without betraying his identity. Perhaps he intended to lie in wait for her in the grounds of the estate, and trust that her

interest in him would induce her to keep his secret.

"Is that you, Christy?" called a voice from the steamer, as the Florence approached the Bellevite.

"Answer him, Corny," said Captain Carboneer, in a low voice. "Say 'yes,' and ask who it is that speaks."

"Yes," repeated Corny. "Who are you?"

"Sampson," replied the man on board of the steamer.

"And who is with him," added the captain.

"Are you alone on board?" demanded Corny, varying his speech a little from his instructions.

"No; Warping is on board, but he has gone to sleep in the pilot-house. Do you want him?"

"No; but you wish to take a couple of friends on board to obtain the measure of a gun-carriage," continued Captain Carboneer.

"No; I don't want Warping; I only wanted to know if he was on board," repeated Corny. "I have a couple of friends here who want to measure a gun-carriage to-night, for they have to leave in the morning."

"Very well, young man; you understand your-

self very well," said the captain, in tones of approval.

By this time Captain Carboneer had brought the boat alongside the accommodation steps, the lower part of which were hoisted up to prevent any water tramps from coming on board without permission. But when Corny had delivered the last message, the steps were lowered, and the Florence made fast to them. Corny was told to lead the way, and act as though he were Christy Passford, and owned the ship in his own right.

The planter's son went up the steps, and the other two followed him, though the naval officer had really ascertained all he wished to know. There were only two ship-keepers on board, and they would be no obstacle in the way of the ship's company to which the captain had alluded. But the leader of the enterprise had another object in view, though it was only secondary in its nature. He was afraid to overburden the mind of Corny, and he said nothing more.

"Is everything all right on board, Sampson?" asked Corny, as he stepped down upon the deck of the vessel.

"All right, Christy," replied the man.

"I am glad to hear it. Is there anything new?"

"Nothing at all, Christy. I have been overhauling the boilers a little to-day for the want of something to do, and they are in first-rate condition. As you told me to-day that we might expect the order to report at the navy yard at any minute, I thought I would have everything as nearly ready as it could be."

"You have done very well, Sampson," added Corny, approvingly. "We are to get under way early in the morning, and if father gets home he will start the steamer as soon as he comes. He went to the city this evening, and probably he will bring the order with him," continued Corny, making use of the information he had obtained in the house.

"Where is this long gun, my man?" asked Captain Carboneer, taking a measure from his pocket.

"Forward, sir," replied Sampson, as he led the way.

The captain kept some distance behind the ship-keeper, and took Corny by the arm to detain him.

"Tell him to get up steam at once," whispered

the leader of the party, as he hastened forward to the long midship gun, where he proceeded to take his measurements as though he were in real earnest, though it was so dark that he could not possibly see the marks on his tape, even if he tried to do so.

"You say that everything is ready to start the fires, Sampson?" said Corny, as soon as he had a chance to speak to the ship-keeper.

"Everything is ready, Christy, and I have only to touch the match to the shavings to make a beginning," replied Sampson. "Is there any news about my appointment in the engine-room, Christy?"

"Not yet, Sampson; but the papers will soon come, and I am almost willing to guarantee your appointment."

"Mr. Vapoor has already spoken a good word for me."

"All right, Sampson; then you are sure of the position. I am very sure that we shall get the order before morning to move the steamer over to the navy yard, and I think you had better start the fires at once, Sampson," continued Corny, making himself as much at home on board of the

steamer as though he had really been the person he was supposed to be.

"All right, Christy; and if the order don't come as soon as you expect it, we can bank the fires, and no harm will be done," replied the oiler, for such was his position on board, though he was evidently expecting something better.

By this time Captain Carboneer had finished taking the measure of the gun-carriage, though he had not been able to see anything. But he had been through all the forms, and that answered his purpose just as well. He declared that he had no further business on board, and the trio went to the accommodation ladder. Sampson had called his sleeping companion, and already the black smoke began to pour out of the smokestack.

"That was all very handsomely done," said Major Pierson, as they stepped on board of the Florence.

"Everything worked very well; but it was all owing to the fact that the ship-keeper thought that Corny was some other person," replied the captain.

"I know that he took him for Christy Passford, and I have had some experience with Christy,"

replied the major, recalling his attempts to prevent the Bellevite from escaping from Mobile Bay. "He is a smart fellow, as the Yankees would say, and it is fortunate that he is not here at the present time."

"He can't be very far off," suggested Corny. "He was expected back to supper, and I wanted to see him, for he is my cousin. He must be about here somewhere."

"Never mind whether he is or not; we have finished our business here, and the harvest is ripe for the sickle. We will leave this boat just where we found it, for I have a rowboat a little farther down the river," continued Captain Carboneer.

"I suppose I ought to return to my uncle's house," suggested Corny. "If they miss me they will be looking about here to ascertain what has become of me."

"I think you had better not try to relieve their anxiety to-night. If they are worried about you, they will get over it in the morning when they find the steamer is missing," said Captain Carboneer, with something like a chuckle in his tones when he pictured the surprise of the "Yankees" in making the discovery that the Bellevite had

taken to herself wings, and sped on her way to the South.

"I don't think they will worry about me," added Corny, laughing. "I was afraid they might think I was here to capture the city of New York, or something of that sort."

"I think you had better not undeceive them to-night," replied the captain, as he ran the yacht upon the beach near where he had found her.

"Everything looks exceedingly well for our enterprise."

"If you get that steamer into Mobile Bay" —

"I don't intend to get her into the bay; that would be folly, and I shall run no risks among the blockaders, for a single shot might give her back to her present owners."

"No matter; if you only get her, and she is under the flag of the Confederacy, it will put me back where I was when she went into the bay by a Yankee trick," added Major Pierson.

"After the war, if you wish to see the young lady, you will have more time to attend to the affair, and I shall wish you every success then," said the captain lightly.

"How long do you think the war will last,

Captain Carboneer?" asked the major, in this connection.

"Possibly it may last a year, though if we can break up that blockade, it will not last six months longer."

The trio landed on the beach, and the naval officer made sure that the Florence was securely fixed in the gravel. The party walked down stream, embarked in the boat of which the captain had spoken. It was pulled by two men, and after they had gone about a mile, the captain began to blow a boatswain's whistle which he took from his pocket.

But they had hardly jumped down on the beach before Christy Passford opened the cabin door of the yacht, and crept out with the utmost care.

CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN CARBONEER AND HIS PARTY

As Captain Carboneer blew his whistle, a mile below the moorings of the Bellevite, an occasional response came from the shore. Everything was remarkably quiet on the river, though at long intervals a steamer passed on its way up or down the stream. The signals made by the naval officer were not loud, and the replies, made without the aid of any instrument, were quite feeble. One might have taken them for some frolic on the part of the boys.

"I don't quite understand this business," said Major Pierson, after he had listened a while to the signals. "I suppose from the answers you get, that your men are all along the river, and the woods seem to be full of them."

"I have no doubt they are all here," replied Captain Carboneer. "I have been in this vicinity all day, and I have made good use of my time. I

believe the Bellevite belongs to the Confederacy, and it shall be no fault of mine if the goods are not delivered in good order and condition."

"My father was confident that he should obtain her at Nassau, though he was mistaken," added the major.

"But when she went within our lines, we were all satisfied that she was ours. I have not yet been able to understand why she was permitted to escape."

"If you mean by that to cast any blame upon those who did their best to prevent her escape, Captain Carboneer, you wrong them grossly," said Major Pierson. "She came on a friendly visit to the plantation of Colonel Passford; but this gentleman, though the owner of the steamer was his own brother, promptly gave information of her presence in the creek, and did all he could to have her captured. No man could have sacrificed more to his patriotism than he did."

"I do not reflect on him or on any one; I only wonder how the Bellevite contrived to escape when several steamers were sent out to capture her," added the captain.

"The son of the owner of the Bellevite was a

prisoner of mine, for when I had my brother arrested for desertion, this young man was with him. The only mistake I made was in not putting him in irons. The captain of my tug proved to be a traitor to the Confederacy, and this fellow, with Christy Passford, did the most of the mischief in preventing the capture of the steamer."

"I was told that he was a smart boy," added the naval officer.

"He is all of that; and I think it was very fortunate that he did not happen to be at home when we visited the Bellevite just now," said Major Pierson, who evidently had a proper respect for the abilities of the millionnaire's son.

"I do not see that his presence in his father's mansion, if he had been there, could have made any difference," added the captain, as he sounded his whistle again, and heard a faint response from the shore. "As long as he was not actually on board of the steamer, he was harmless."

"Perhaps he was, though I have the feeling that it would have been otherwise. There was a whistle from the shore."

"I heard it, and I understand it. Haslett has done his whole duty, I judge," replied Captain Carboneer.

"Who is Haslett?" asked the major curiously. "I never heard of him before."

"He is to be the first lieutenant of the Bellevite."

"You seem to have a full supply of officers and men, Captain Carboneer," added Major Pierson, apparently a little disconcerted. "I do not see that I am of the least use here, for you seem to have done everything without consulting me."

"In naval matters I have; but I give you full credit for the planning of the enterprise," replied the captain, in his softest tones.

"When I was removed from my command because I allowed the steamer to pass the forts, I felt that a great injustice had been done to me. I did all I could to effect the capture of the vessel, but the attempt was a failure," argued the major. "The shot hole through the bow of the Belle utterly wrecked her, and the force on board of her could do nothing, and Christy Passford had brought my own tug to bear against me. Why, the Bellevite actually saved the force on board of the Belle from drowning. A violent gale came up, and that did a great deal to nullify all our efforts. But I think I did my whole duty."

"I have no doubt of it, Major Pierson; and for that reason you were sent on this mission; and I am confident that the success of the enterprise will restore you to your former command, or give you another quite as good," said Captain Carboneer, as consolation to the military arm of the expedition.

"But I cannot see that I have been of any use to this enterprise, and I might as well have staid at home."

"You are too modest by half, major. You planned the expedition, and suggested that Corny should take part in it, as he would have the *entrée* to the residence of Captain Passford. But, being a mere boy, he could not be sent alone, and your services were likely to be of the most important character. It is no fault of yours that we found everything made ready for us, as it were. It might have been quite different, and the burden of the action might have rested upon you. It is all right as it is."

"I am satisfied," added the major, "though I think it was no more than right that you should have consulted me in regard to your methods, of which I am still profoundly ignorant. In getting

up the scheme, I based everything on the fact that Corny could go into his uncle's house and obtain all the information we needed."

"The scheme was well concocted; and I shall have the pleasure of reporting to the government that the military arm of the expedition conducted the enterprise to a perfect success, the naval force only doing the duty pointed out by the military."

"You are very kind, Captain Carboneer," said Major Pierson, who could not well help being entirely satisfied, and even greatly pleased, with this happy showing of the final result.

"By daylight in the morning we shall be outside of Sandy Hook, I expect. We have no time to waste, and you can see for yourself how the affair of the young lady would have complicated our operations."

"How do you intend to convey these men, who seem to be scattered all along the shores of the river, to the steamer?"

"They understand my signals, and they will all be ready within an hour to take a small steamer which will pick them up."

"But where is the steamer?"

"She is farther down the river. As you seem

to be a little sensitive to the fact that I have not consulted you in regard to the naval operations of this enterprise, I can tell you in a few words all there is of them," continued Captain Carboneer. "As you are aware, as soon as our plan was matured by you, I left Mobile with Lieutenant Haslett, though you knew nothing about him, for Nassau. We had no difficulty in getting out of the bay, for the blockade was not then enforced. At Nassau I engaged a couple of English engineers, and a few other officers, with thirty seamen, mostly English, who were looking for prize-money. I had to take my force to Quebec, for no steamer offered for New York. I sent them all here in small parties, and Haslett posted them along the river when I told him they would be needed to-night."

"I did not leave Mobile till two weeks later with Corny," added the major. "But I got here sooner than you did."

"You were more fortunate in finding a steamer. I believe I have a capital crew, though I shall obtain more men at Bermuda, or some other port. There are plenty of good English sailors who are willing to fight on either side if there is a good

showing for prize-money ; and I have no doubt I shall capture a dozen vessels before we reach the Bermudas, which will fully satisfy them, especially as the government will pay the value of all vessels we are compelled to burn on the high seas."

"You will have the advantage over everything that floats, for I was told that the Bellevite made twenty knots an hour, and had done twenty-two," said Major Pierson. "At what time do you think you will get on board of the steamer?"

"By one or two in the morning, I hope; but it will depend upon the steamer Haslett engages, though he told me he had bargained for an old one with a walking-beam; but that will answer our purpose. I believe he had to buy her, though she was of no great value."

At a creek which appeared to be the rendezvous of the conspirators, the boat left the river; but there was no steamer, though quite a number of men had gathered there. Leaving the party in the boat to follow out the remaining details of their enterprise, which, by this time, in the absence of anything like an obstacle, they regarded as so many mere formalities, it becomes necessary to make another visit to the mansion of Captain

Passford. This gentleman had gone to the city upon important business connected with the fitting out of the Bellevite, and he had not returned when the clock in the great hall struck ten, which was at about the time Captain Carboneer and his companions went into the creek five miles down the river.

"There is no knowing when your father will come home, Florry," said Mrs. Passford, as she suspended her work on a stocking she was knitting for the soldiers. "But I can't imagine what has become of Christy. He never stays out as late as this unless he tells us of it beforehand."

"I am really worried about him, mother," replied the beautiful daughter, looking up from the stocking on which she was employed. "He went away in the Florence, and something may have happened to him."

"I think not, Florry; there has been no storm, or heavy blow, and he thinks he is as safe in his boat as he is on shore," added Mrs. Passford, with an effort to control the fears of the daughter. "He may have gone down to the city. He is very indignant at the delay in giving the order to have the steamer sent to the navy yard, and

wherever he is, I am confident he is doing something in connection with the steamer."

"I wish I knew whether the Florence was at the boathouse," continued Florry. "He said he was going out in the boat; but perhaps he did not. Perhaps he is with father."

"There is the front-door bell," added Mrs. Passford, with a start. "It cannot be your father or Christy, for both of them have latch-keys. Who could come here at this time in the evening?"

"Mr. Paul Vapoor," said the man-servant, who answered the bell.

The gentleman announced walked into the sitting-room without any ceremony, for he had long been a familiar visitor. He was dressed in the full uniform of a chief engineer of the navy. Removing his cap, he politely bowed to the two ladies; and any one who was looking might have seen that Miss Florry blushed a little when she saw him; and very likely if Major Pierson had witnessed the roses on her fair cheek, he might possibly have concluded that it would have been useless to postpone the capture of the Bellevite to enable him to fortify his position near her.

"I beg your pardon, ladies, for calling so late,"

said Mr. Vapoor, as he drew a long envelope from his pocket. "But I thought Christy might wish to see what is in this envelope before he retired."

"Why, what is in it?" asked Mrs. Passford.

"Christy's commission as a midshipman in the navy."

"But Christy is not at home, and we are somewhat anxious about him," added the mother, stating the facts in regard to her son.

Paul Vapoor volunteered to go in search of him, and left the house.

CHAPTER VI

THE CABIN OF THE FLORENCE

If Captain Carboneer had felt any especial interest in the Florence as a sailing yacht, he might have desired to see the cabin of the craft, which had always been the delight of Christy Passford. He had expended a great deal of his pocket-money upon the arrangement and furnishing of the cabin of his yacht, not only because he spent a considerable portion of his vacation hours in it, but because it had been a perpetual study with him to enlarge and improve it.

It is very difficult to get three pints of liquid into a quart measure, and it was a conundrum of this sort that Christy was studying upon when he tried to make a parlor, bedroom, and dining-saloon of the very limited space in the forward part of the Florence. Though he could hardly get the three pints into the quart measure, he had done the best he could, and succeeded to a rather re-

markable degree. But spite of the miracle which had been wrought in the cabin, Captain Carboneer did not even try the door of the apartment when he and his companions went on board of the yacht. He was so absorbed in the enterprise in which he was engaged, that his indifference to the miracle of the cabin may be excused.

Even the double doors of the cabin were of handsome wood, elaborately polished; and they were not secured with the usual appliance of a padlock, but were provided with an expensive mortise-lock, which could be operated upon either side. If Captain Carboneer had tried to open that door, he would have found that it was fastened; but perhaps he could not have discovered that it had been secured upon the inside. Unless, therefore, he had taken the trouble to break open the door, he could not have ascertained that Christy Passford was actually in the cabin.

Possibly, if he had opened the door by any means, he would not have discovered that the proprietor of the boat was in this dainty apartment, for the skipper had taken a great deal of pains to conceal himself so that he should not be seen, even if the intruders in the Florence had

succeeded in opening the doors without the aid of the key in his pocket. Though he had two very nice berths in the cabin, miraculously arranged as to space, Christy did not occupy one on the present occasion, for in that case the unbidden visitors would have seen him if their curiosity had led them to force the doors.

When the cook of the Florence, usually the skipper of the craft, was engaged in the practice of the culinary art, he seated himself on what looked like a box in front of the stove. But the interior of this box was really a part of the cabin, for it contained the feet of any one occupying the berth on the starboard side. The cookroom had no end of bins, lockers and drawers to contain the variety of provisions and stores necessary to get up a dinner for the skipper and his guests, when he had any. And even all these places could not contain everything that was needed on board. Under the two berths were large, though not very deep, lockers, one of which contained the jib-topsail of the craft, and other spare sails, while the opposite one was the fuel locker of the sloop.

As the boat had not been used for a long time in cruising, the fuel receptacle was empty, though

a spare gaff-topsail had been thrown into it. This locker was big enough to admit the body-corporate of the skipper. It was not a particularly clean place, for a portion of it had been economized for the stowage of the charcoal, which the skipper preferred to wood. But he did not rebel at the blackness of the retreat he had chosen, for he wore his boating dress, which was hardly stylish enough for a dude or a dandy.

But Skipper Passford did not crawl into this black hole for the fun of the thing. He had been spending his time in waiting for a movement to be made in regard to the Bellevite. He staid in the house all the forenoon, and, after lunch, he sailed down the river in the Florence, though with no object in doing so beyond passing the time. Not far from the beach where he had afterwards left the yacht, he discovered a boat rowed by two men with a third in the stern sheets.

The breeze was quite gentle, though the Florence would sail at a very tolerable speed when there was the least apology for a wind. She was doing so on the present occasion, and Christy had stretched himself out on the cushioned seat, with the spokes of the wheel where he could steer with-

out any exertion, or next to none. The idleness of his days since his return from the eventful cruise of the Bellevite seemed to have infected him with an unnatural indolence.

He felt as though he was rather more than half asleep when he saw the boat with the two oarsmen. It was going up the river, while he was going down. He had to luff a little to keep clear of the oars, but he did not move from his half-recumbent posture. When the boat was alongside, he glanced idly and carelessly at the person in the stern sheets. Instantly he was wide awake, though he did not change his position. The person looked like a gentleman, and Christy was sure that he had seen him before. A couple of minutes of earnest cudgelling of his brain assured him that he had seen the stranger in Nassau; that he was one of the many who wanted to purchase the Bellevite, ostensibly for a merchant vessel, but really for the Confederate navy.

After he had run a short distance farther down the river, Christy came about, the boat being some distance from him, but the gentleman soon landed and walked up the river on the shore, or very near it. In a short time, he was joined by another

person, whose form looked familiar to the skipper of the Florence. He could not identify him, for he was not near enough to him to see his face. A puff of air came from across the river, and the Florence darted ahead, and Christy was soon out of sight of the two strangers.

Near the boundary of his father's estate, he ran the yacht on the sandy beach, letting her strike the sand hard enough to stick where she was for half an hour, though she was not likely to get adrift, for the gentle breeze was blowing her farther on the shore as the tide rose.

Christy hauled down the jib of the sloop, and then seated himself, or rather reclined upon the cushions, though in such a position that he could see the shore, or any persons who came upon it. No one was in sight, and he had no one to watch. The swash of a great steamer passing in the channel made his boat roll heavily for a moment, with the forward part of the bottom resting on the sand. For the want of something better to think of, he began to put conundrums to himself in the absence of any other person to perplex with them. What was the gentleman that wanted to buy a steamer in Nassau doing up the Hudson? This was the

principal one: he could not answer it. He gave it up; as the French have it, he had to "throw his tongue to the dogs," having no use for it in this connection.

But while he was dreaming of the possible mission of the stranger, he heard voices on the beach. Not deeming it wise to show himself, he rolled off the cushion upon the floor of the standing-room, and then fixed himself in a position where he could see and hear what passed between the speakers. He could see without being seen. It did not require a second look for him to decide that the second person on the beach was Major Pierson, though his companion called him Mulgate.

If Christy had been interested before, he was excited now. The two speakers were within earshot of the boat, and in the stillness of the scene he could hear every word that was said. In a few moments he was in full possession of the statements of the captain and the major in regard to their intentions; and it appeared that the gentleman he had seen in Nassau still desired to obtain a steamer.

Before it was dark, Christy was astonished to behold his cousin Corny on the other side of the

fence; and he readily understood that he was to take part in the enterprise in hand. As yet the listener had obtained but little more than the information in regard to the intention of the visitors. When he found that they were disposed to take possession of the Florence, and make their visit to the Bellevite in her, the skipper retired from the standing-room of the boat to the cabin, where he locked the door, and put the key in his pocket. When he realized that they really meant to come on board, he crawled into the space under the starboard berth, and arranged the sail so that it would conceal him in case the intruders pushed their investigation into the cabin.

When he had completed his preparations, he was quite satisfied that he should not be discovered. The trio came on board, and Christy fixed himself so that he could hear every word that was said, for there was a small opening under the berth through which the superfluous length of a pair of oars could be thrust when not in use.

Christy, without the remotest suspicion on the part of the plotters that they could be heard by any living being, and especially not by so dangerous a character as Christy had proved himself

to be to the peace and dignity of the Confederacy, heard all that was said, and he obtained a full idea of the intentions of the conspirators. When they went on board of the Bellevite, he was so excited that he could no longer remain in his prison, but came out, and crept up the accommodation ladder to the deck of the steamer. But he was careful not to show himself, and, having a key to the cabin, he went into it, locking the door after him. Then he had a chance to think.

What should he do? He had no force at hand to beat off such a party as Captain Carboneer mentioned. They might carry out their plot that very night, as they had talked of doing. Perhaps it would be executed at once, even while he was on board, and he would then be a prisoner. This idea was too galling to be considered, and he left the cabin to visit the wardroom. Going still farther forward, he was surprised to hear the roar of the flames in the furnaces below. It looked at that moment as though the Bellevite was doomed to sail under a Confederate flag. But if he could do nothing more, he could save himself, even if he had to jump into the river and swim to the shore.

Christy lost no time in making his way to the main deck of the vessel; but he was careful to avoid the visitors. He went back to the cabin, and went on deck from it. Then he discovered that the trio were in the act of descending the accommodation steps. Mounting the rail he saw them embark in the Florence, and sail down the river. Dismounting from the rail, he hastened to the engine-room, where he found Sampson getting the engine ready to be put in motion.

"Ah, Christy, I thought you had gone," said the oiler.

"Who were those two men who were on board?" asked Christy, not a little excited.

"They were two gentlemen you brought on board, Christy," replied Sampson, innocently enough.

"That I brought on board!" exclaimed the skipper of the Florence.

"Yes, sir; and I thought you had gone ashore with them," added the oiler.

"I brought no men on board, Sampson! What are you talking about?" demanded Christy impatiently.

"Didn't you bring two gentlemen on board, and

didn't one of them want to measure the carriage of the big gun?"

"No! I did not! I have not seen you before now this evening," protested Christy.

"Then I have lost my senses. Didn't you tell me to get up steam, because the steamer would be moved to the navy yard before daylight in the morning?" demanded Sampson, bewildered by the denial of the young man.

"I see now," added Christy. "You mistook Corny for me."

Sampson gave him all the details of the visit of the strangers.

CHAPTER VII

MIDSHIPMAN CHRISTY PASSFORD

"In a word, Sampson, an attempt will be made to-night to capture the Bellevite, and you have been getting up steam for the conspirators," said Christy, when the ship-keeper had finished his narrative of the visit of the trio to the ship.

"Is that so?" exclaimed Sampson, opening his mouth and his eyes very wide at the same time. "Why, I had no more doubt that the young man who was talking to me was Christy than I have that he is talking to me now."

"You had better look at me again, and be sure that you make no mistake," replied Christy, rather disgusted at the failure of the man to identify him.

"I never once thought that it was not you. When the sailboat came alongside, I knew it was the Florence, and I supposed you were in her," pleaded Sampson. "But I spoke to you, as I supposed, when the boat came alongside."

"Did you? What did you say?" asked Christy.

"I said 'Is that you, Christy?' And you said 'Yes.'"

"Of course I did! What else could I say after you had told the enemy just how to proceed. You could not have expected any other answer."

"I suppose I was very stupid; but I hope no harm has been done, for they have not got the steamer yet," added Sampson, very much disconcerted at the blunder he had made, though an older officer than Christy might have had more charity for the ship-keeper.

Seen in broad daylight, there was no striking resemblance between Corny and Christy, though they were of about the same size, and had some traits in common. As Corny and his companions came in the Florence, it was not very strange that Sampson should take it for granted that Christy was one of the evening visitors. The voices of the two cousins were not unlike, and the sound was all he had to guide his judgment. Then he was not in the enemy's country, and he could hardly have been on the lookout for an enemy several miles up the river.

"Certainly no harm has been done, Sampson;

but it is yet to be decided whether or not the Bellevite is to go into the navy of the United States or the navy of the Confederate States," added Christy, leaving the engine-room.

"If we have snuffed the whole thing, I don't believe this steamer will ever wear anything but the Stars and Stripes," said Sampson stoutly; and there could be no doubt in regard to his loyalty, judging from his speech, though that is not always to be trusted in time of war.

"Bellevite, ahoy!" shouted some one at the foot of the accommodation steps.

"Have they come again so soon?" asked Sampson, as he rushed to the rail. "It is only a small canoe."

"Is Christy on board?" called the visitor alongside.

"That is Mr. Vapoor: tell him I am on board," added Christy.

"Christy is on board, sir," replied Sampson to the hail. "Will you come on board, sir?"

Paul Vapoor would and did come on board, and Christy gave him a hearty welcome, for he was more glad to see him than he had ever been before in his life.

"Where have you been all day and all the evening, Christy?" asked the engineer. "Your mother and sister are very much worried about you, for they have not seen you for a long time, and they fear that something has happened to you."

"Something is likely to happen to me and all the rest of us who expect to go to sea in this steamer," replied Christy, as he proceeded to inform his friend as briefly as he could of the great event of the evening.

"Well, if we are not in the enemy's country, the enemy are in ours," replied Paul. "What is to be done?"

"That is what I have been thinking of. I listened very attentively to all that passed between Major Pierson and Captain Carboneer, and I am satisfied that the latter has a considerable force somewhere on the river, and their headquarters are at the mouth of a creek five miles down the river."

"How many have they?" asked the engineer.

"I don't know; they did not mention the number in figures, but they have enough to work the ship, and even to fight her," replied Christy, very seriously.

"That means forty or fifty, at least," added Paul. "This looks like a heavy matter, and it is quite time that something was done about it."

"But what shall we do is the question," said Christy anxiously. "We have two men on board beside ourselves, and we can hardly expect to hold our own against fifty."

"Who is this Captain Carboneer?"

"I saw him at Nassau, and he looked like a man of decision and character. I don't know anything about him, but I have no doubt he is a naval officer, both from the circumstances and from what I heard. I should say that he knows what he is about. You said that my father has not yet returned from the city?"

"He had not come at ten o'clock, and if he comes at all, the late train does not arrive till after twelve."

"It may be too late to do anything at that time," said Christy. "But I don't mean to give up the ship."

"Good! I am with you on that point, Christy. I called at your house to inform you that you had been appointed a midshipman in the navy, and you are likely to have a chance to christen your

commission to-night. This was all the rank they could give you, though you will really be a passed midshipman, and be a master very soon."

Christy was delighted with this news, though he had no time to make a demonstration of delight over it. He had narrowly escaped being the third officer of the Bellevite the year before, because his father did not believe in putting him forward as fast as his abilities would have warranted him in doing. Captain Breaker and Paul Vapoor had made the application for a position in the navy; for his father would not do it, for the reason that he did not wish to ask any favors for a member of his own family.

"I thank you and Captain Breaker for all you have done for me, Paul, and I hope I shall be able to give a good account of myself. But we have no time to talk about that now. Captain Carboneer was waiting for a steamer which his naval associate, Lieutenant Haslett, was to charter or buy for the use of the party," said Christy, as he led the way to the forward deck of the steamer.

He and the engineer mounted the top-gallant forecastle, and looked intently down the river. The tide was coming in, so that the vessel, in

coming up to her cable, pointed in that direction. But they could see nothing, not a craft of any description. Then Christy led the way to the long gun mounted amidships. He sighted across the piece, and, in a moment more, his mind seemed to have settled on the policy to be pursued in the present dangerous emergency. Perhaps the capture of a steamer under such circumstances was a thing unheard of at that time, but doubtless it looked simple enough to those who were engaged in the enterprise.

"Do you think of engaging the enemy at long range, Christy?" asked Paul, with a smile on his fine face, as seen by the light of the lantern which Sampson had brought to the place.

"I think of beating them off in any way we can," replied the middy, as his friends all called him from that time. "I have the gun pointing to a certain object on the river, which Captain Carboneer's steamer must pass. He can't help putting his craft where the muzzle of this piece will cover it; and if we pull the lock-string at that instant, the shot will knock his steamer all to pieces, and spill the conspirators into the river."

"If you hit her," suggested Paul.

"You can't very well help hitting her. Just squint along that gun, and see where the shot will bring up."

Paul complied with this request, and took a long look over the great gun.

"I should say that it was pointed a little too high," said he.

"Perhaps it is; I have not fixed it just as I mean to have it. We will put in the charge before we do that," added Christy, who was now as self-possessed as though there was no excitement attending the operation he was arranging.

"Do you know what steamer Captain Carbine will have?" asked Paul.

"Not Carbine; Carboneer. No, I don't know what steamer he will have; only that she is an old one, and has a walking-beam," replied Christy.

"That is rather indefinite, midshipman," added Paul, with a smile. "You can't always tell what a steamer is by looking at her, especially in the night; and a walking-beam is not a novelty on a steamer upon this river. You may send that shot through the wrong vessel; and if you should happen to kill a dozen or two of loyal citizens of the State of New York, they might be mean enough

to hang you, or send you to the State prison for life for it. It won't do to fire off a shotted gun like that baby without knowing pretty well what you are shooting at."

"That is a long argument, Paul; and I have not the remotest idea of doing any such thing as you describe. I am going to know what we are firing at before we pull the lock-string," replied Christy, rather impatiently. "But we have no time to dig up mare's nests. We will get up the ammunition and load this gun; then we will do the rest of the business."

As ship-keeper and a member of the engineer's department for the last year, Sampson knew where everything was to be found. With all the usual precautions, the magazine was opened, and ammunition enough for three charges was conveyed to the deck, Warping having been called in to assist in the work. The gun was carefully loaded under the direction of Christy, who had been fully instructed and drilled in the duty. It was pointed as nearly as practicable to the point in the channel which the hostile steamer must pass, though the aim was to be rectified at the last moment.

Paul went to his stateroom and took off his

handsome uniform, replacing it with a suit of his working garments. Then he hastened to the engine, examined it, and satisfied himself that it was in good condition for the office which was soon to be required of it. He gave Sampson particular directions for his duty, and then went down the accommodation steps with the midshipman.

"What are you going to do next, Christy?" asked Paul, for the young naval officer had been too busy with his preparations to develop his plan in full.

"We will go ashore first, and I will take the Florence to the boat-house," replied Christy. "The next thing to be done is to make a reconnoissance down the river."

"Why not go down in the Florence?" suggested Paul.

"Because that would be too simple and innocent altogether," replied the middy; and perhaps he felt some of the dignity of his new rank. "I think we had better see without being seen, especially as Captain Carboneer has seen and sailed the sloop. I have no doubt he has a sharp, nautical eye, and that he will recognize her. He might

be rash enough to capture her, and thus deprive the United States Navy of two young, but able and hopeful officers, to say nothing of bottling them up so that he could make short work of the Bellevite."

"You are right, Christy, as you always are. But see your mother before you do anything, and I will obey orders. She worries about you."

They landed and hastened to the mansion.

CHAPTER VIII

ARRANGING THE SIGNALS

Mrs. Passford was astounded at the news brought in by her son, and Miss Florry was terrified when informed that Major Pierson was not far from the mansion. But Paul Vapoor assured the latter that there was no danger, and Christy convinced his mother, who had a great deal of confidence in him, that he was fully equal to the occasion.

"But I do not see that you can beat off the assailants if they happen to get alongside of the Bellevite," suggested Mrs. Passford. "There are only four of you at the most."

"I hope for re-enforcements," replied Christy, as he rang a bell for a servant. "Beeks and Thayer, two of the quartermasters, live in the village; Mr. Watts, the chief steward, and three others of the old ship's company, live near here, and I think we can raise half a dozen more, making ten in all."

"I know where to find half a dozen coal-passers," added Paul.

"Then we shall do very well if we succeed in finding all these," added Christy, as the man-servant came to the door.

"Call up all the stablemen, and have two horses saddled as quick as possible," continued Christy to the man.

"What's that for, Christy?" asked Paul, who had succeeded in quieting the fears of Miss Florry.

He was not altogether inexperienced in this duty, for the young lady had been alarmed more than once on board of the steam yacht, and he was always more successful than any other person at these times.

"I can't stop to talk it all over, Paul; but if you will trust me, I will tell you as we go along what I think of doing," replied Christy.

"All right, midshipman; I belong to the engine department, and we always obey orders even if the ship goes down," added Paul, laughing.

"I am willing enough to tell you, but I have not the time to spin a long yarn, and perhaps answer objections, just now. We will mount the

horses as soon as they come to the door, and drum up the force we have mentioned."

Christy continued by giving Paul the names of those he was to visit and summon to the deck of the Bellevite, and then they were to meet at a given place. They mounted the two fleet horses which Christy had selected for the occasion, and dashed off to the town, a short distance from the river. The middy found the two quartermasters, who boarded in the same house. They were to go on board of the steamer at once; but Beeks was to bring a canoe from the boat-house to the point on the shore nearest to the Bellevite before he went on board. Both of these men were cautioned not to say anything about any person they might see, and the same instruction was given to all the others whose services were required.

Mr. Watts had not retired when Christy called at his house, and he was duly startled by the information the young officer gave him. He was as ready to take part in the enterprise as even the middy himself, and he was conducted to the place where Paul was to meet the leader. He had more calls to make than Christy, and they had to wait some time for him; but when he did come, he

reported that he had found and sent on board all the firemen and coal-passers he had named, and a few more, besides the old sailors who had sailed for years in the yachts of the owner of the Bellevite.

The services of about a dozen had been procured, but half of these were to do duty in connection with the engine, and the party so hastily gathered were not strong enough to beat off the force of the enemy if they attempted to board the vessel.

"Now, Paul, I want you to understand the whole affair before we go any farther; and I wish you would go on board and take the command there," said the midshipman, as soon as the engineer had reported the result of his mission.

"But are you not going to be on board, Christy? I don't pretend to be a sailor or a gunner," said Paul.

"I shall go on board as soon as I can," replied Christy. "You will find a boat on the shore, near the steamer, and you will go on board in that; but have the boat sent back for me."

"All right, Christy; I will obey orders," added Paul, as he dismounted from his horse.

"Mr. Watts will take your horse, and ride with

me down the shore. We can see the river all the way, for we shall not stick to the road when it leads us away from it. As soon as we discover the steamer that is to bring up the enemy, I will run my horse back to this point, and go on board."

"That is all easy enough," added Paul.

"Easy enough; but I can form no idea as to when the steamer will come. We may have to wait till morning for it, and perhaps the plan of the enemy will fail, and they will not come at all."

"If they don't come to-night, they never will; and there will be time enough for the home guard to scour the woods, and arrest all suspicious persons."

"I said what I did so that you need not be impatient if you have to wait a long time. You will have a watch kept from the moment you get on board, and no stranger is to be allowed to put a foot on the deck. Captain Carboneer may send some one of his party to see that everything is working right on board for his side of the affair."

"I will do that."

"See that the steam is well up, so that we can move off in good time if we find it necessary to get under way," continued Christy.

"I thought that was a settled point, and the ship was to be taken down the river in any case," said Paul.

"I supposed so myself in the beginning; but if it is not necessary to run away, I don't care to do so. Let Boxie see that the cable is buoyed and ready to run out at a moment's notice."

"All right, midshipman," replied Paul, as he hastened to the boat.

"Why does he call you midshipman? — that is a new name," said the chief steward.

"He brought me the news this evening that I had been appointed in the navy with that rank," replied Christy. "Now we will ride down the river. Do you happen to know what time it is, Mr. Watts?"

"I don't know, but I think it is about half-past eleven. I am not much of an equestrian," replied the steward, as he mounted the horse, "for I have been to sea all my life; but I think I can stay on if the beast don't run away with me."

"He is perfectly gentle, and he will not run away with you. We have no occasion to ride fast, and we may not have to go more than two or three miles."

They rode along the river for a few minutes, and then Christy reined in his steed and dismounted. He went to the water side, at a point where there was a bend, and carefully examined the surroundings, both above and below. He could not see the Bellevite in the darkness, for he had directed the engineer to allow no light to be shown on board of her. He had brought a little mathematics into his calculations, and he had pointed the big gun of the steamer so as to cover the craft with the walking-beam when she came in sight around this turn of the stream. By this plan she was sure to come into the range of the piece, no matter on which side of the channel she was moving.

"Now, Mr. Watts, I have a further duty for you to perform," said Christy, as he explained his plan to the steward. "We shall go down the river till we meet this steamer which conveys the enemy. As you are a sailor as well as a caterer, you have a nautical eye, and when you have seen this steamer you will know her again."

"Trust me for that. If it is the old tub I think it is, I know her already," answered the steward.

"What steamer do you think it is?"

"The old Vampire; and if you give her much of a rap, she will go to the bottom without the least difficulty."

"I don't care where she goes to, provided she don't put her passengers on board of the Bellevite. But I am taking you down the river with me in order that you may see her and know her."

"I shall know her as soon as I see her."

"As I said before, I shall run my horse back and get aboard of the Bellevite as soon as I am satisfied that the enemy are moving up the river," continued Christy.

"I am afraid I shall not be able to keep up with you if you run your horse," suggested the steward.

"I don't want you to keep up with me. You can come along as leisurely as you please, though you must not let the enemy get ahead of you."

"If the enemy are in the old Vampire, I could keep ahead of her on foot."

"You had better keep ahead of her on your horse about a quarter of a mile, or more; but your main duty will be here. I have brought with me half a dozen Roman candles, and I am going to fix them in the ground on this spot. Here is a

bunch of matches," said Christy, handing it to him.

The steward watched the midshipman while he planted the fireworks in the sand, and particularly marked the spot where they were located, for his companion told him he was to fire them, and he must be ready to do so without any delay.

"A boy could do that and like the fun of it," said Mr. Watts, laughing at the simple duty he was to perform.

"But it is the time that you are to do it, and the boy might be skylarking, or become impatient. This signal of the fireworks is to assure us at the right moment that the Vampire, if it should be she, is in the place where I expect her to be."

"I understand it perfectly."

"After I leave you, another steamer may come along, and get to this point ahead of the Vampire; and I should be very sorry to blow her out of the water, or sink her under it. You are to let us know by this signal that it is the Vampire, and no other, that is coming round the bend. You had better leave your horse a short distance from the river, for that gun will make every pane of glass within a mile of it shake when it is discharged."

"You may be sure that I will not be on his back at that time."

"Still further: I have planted six candles in the sand. You will light only one of them when the steamer begins to round the bend. That will be enough to inform us of the fact on board of the Bellevite."

"What are the others for?" asked the steward, taking a memorandum-book from his pocket as though he intended to write his instructions.

"It is not necessary to write it. We shall not be able to see what effect the shot produces after we fire. If the Vampire, always supposing she is the one, is not hurt, light a second candle — only one of them. If she should be disabled, you will light two candles."

Christy repeated what he had said, and was careful not to give the steward too much to remember. As soon as the matter was fully understood, the middy mounted his horse, and they proceeded on their mission down the river. After they had ridden about three miles, Mr. Watts insisted that the steamer was coming, and that it was the Vampire.

"I don't see anything," added Christy.

"Neither do I; but I know that the Vampire is coming up the river. If you listen, you will hear a hoarse puffing; and nothing but that old ark could make such a wheezy noise," replied the steward.

The middy heard it and was satisfied.

CHAPTER IX

THE APPROACH OF THE VAMPIRE

THE Vampire, as the steward had no doubt it was, could not be less than a mile distant from the spot where the two horsemen had halted in the road. Christy was very familiar with this portion of the river, and after he had listened a few moments, he was satisfied from the direction of the sound he heard, that a mile was very nearly the exact distance. The approaching steamer had to come around a small bend, the arc of which made just a mile.

"I don't wish to blow up a dozen or twenty loyal citizens, and I must make sure in some way that Captain Carboneer's party is on board of that steamer," said Christy, as he led his horse into a field, and tied him to a tree, the steward following his example.

"That would be a very bad thing to do," added Mr. Watts, as they walked back to the river.

"But I don't see why it is necessary to blow up even any rebels on the present occasion. If that naval officer has forty men, as you think he has, a shot from that long gun would make terrible havoc among them if you succeeded in hitting her. You might kill half of them."

"If we do they, and not we, will be responsible for it," added Christy, somewhat appalled by the suggestion of his companion.

"If you have steam up on board of the Bellevite, why not get under way and run down the river," continued Mr. Watts.

"Perhaps I am a coward, but I am afraid to do that," replied the midshipman, thoughtfully.

"We all know that you are no coward, Christy, and if you don't send a shot into the Vampire, it will not be because you are afraid."

"Although I know the river as well as any pilot in this vicinity, I should not dare to run the Bellevite at full speed around such a bend as the one off this spot," Christy explained. "We have not above half a dozen trained sailors who know how to handle a cutlass on board, and all the others will be needed in working the steamer. The coal-passers would be good for nothing in repelling boarders."

"You think Captain Carboneer would board the steamer, do you?"

"I have no doubt he would. He is a naval officer, and he knows what he is about. There are several ways that he might get a hold on the Bellevite, and, if he got alongside of her, I am afraid it would be all up with us, and we should have a fair chance to see the inside of a Confederate prison. I am afraid to run the risk you suggest, Mr. Watts."

"You know best, and I don't mean to interfere; I only thought I would suggest the idea," added the steward, as they reached the bank of the river again.

After he had secured his horse, Christy had lighted a match and looked at his watch. It was a quarter of one, and still the puffing of the Vampire came from the same direction. It was plain enough to him that the old tub was not a racer. But she showed herself beyond the bend in about a quarter of an hour, indicating that her rate of speed, or rather of slowness, was not more than four statute miles an hour. But this was simply confirmation of what the steward had said on the subject. Yet she was coming, though it was too

dark on the river to see her in detail. Though he strained his eyes to the utmost, Christy could not discover any men on her forward deck.

"I think you had better move back where you cannot be seen," said the midshipman, in a low tone, to his companion.

"Do you wish me to leave you alone, Christy?" asked the steward, surprised at the request.

"That is just what I wish, for I don't care to have any one on board of the Vampire see more than one person at this point," replied Christy, still gazing through the gloom at the approaching steamer.

"Excuse me, Christy; but what are you going to do? I prefer to be within supporting distance of you."

"I don't think I shall need any support. I am going to hail the Vampire, and ask if Captain Carboneer is on board," replied the midshipman, quietly.

"You are going to hail her!" exclaimed Mr. Watts. "Are you mad, Christy? I should say that you were."

"You shall be your own judge on that point."

"But the moment you use the name of Captain

Carboneer, they will take the alarm, and the next thing will be a bullet through your head."

"I will take the risk of that," answered Christy. "But you need not go far from the river on this dark night. There is a clump of bushes this side of the road, and you may get behind it."

The steward was not at all satisfied with the situation, but he complied with the request of the midshipman, and concealed himself behind the bushes. Christy took a position on the very verge of the water. The progress of the Vampire was made at the expense of a hideous noise, and she was a craft not at all adapted to the purpose of the conspirators. The middy watched her with the most intense interest as she approached the point where he was stationed. There was no light to be seen on board, and there appeared to be no men on her lower deck; but she had a cabin and other rooms, in which a force as large as that of the captain could be concealed.

"Steamer, ahoy!" shouted Christy, as soon as the Vampire was abreast of the spot he occupied.

No answer came to this hail, and the midshipman repeated it, louder than before.

"On shore!" replied a voice from the forward deck.

"Come up to the shore, and take me on board, will you?" continued Christy, disguising his voice to some extent the better to answer his purpose.

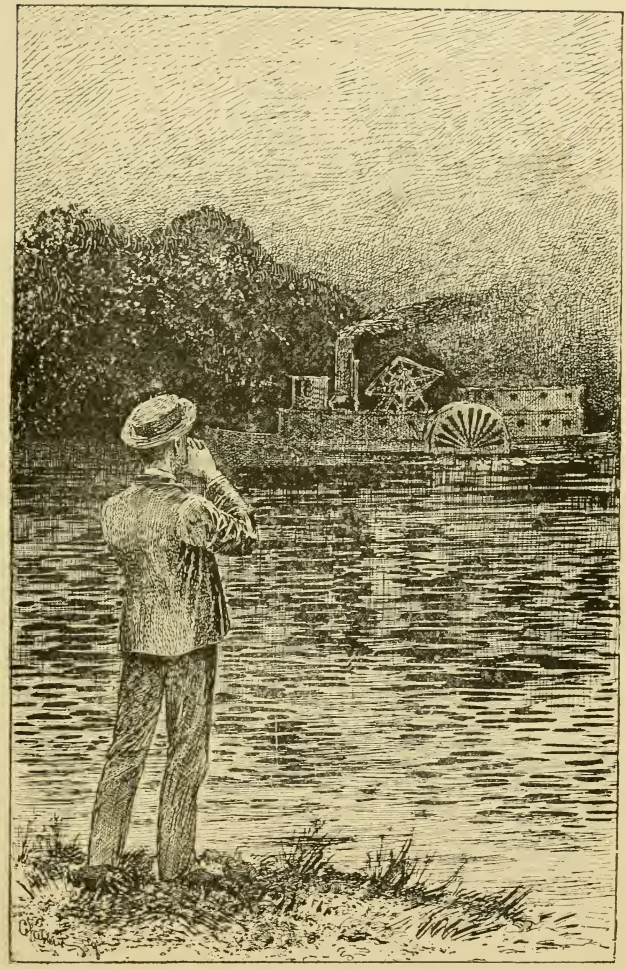
"Who is it?" demanded the person on board who acted as speaker; and Christy could see his form very distinctly, as he stood at an open gangway, and was the only person in sight on the lower deck.

"Brigster," replied Christy, chewing up the word he coined so that the man could not possibly make it out.

"Are you alone, Brewster?" demanded the speaker from the steamer.

This was a hard question, and with less information than he had obtained while in his cabin on board of the Florence, he would not have dared to reply to it. But he knew something of the plan of the conspirators, and he felt competent to answer.

"Three more back in the road," replied Christy, promptly; and he said three so as to give the idea that the force on board might be increased by this number. "Is Captain Carboneer on board of that steamer?" asked the midshipman, coming to his main point.



"Steamer, Ahoy!" shouted Christy. — Page 107.

"He is, and we are all here but four," replied the speaker on the deck; and Christy was satisfied that the captain was the person by this time, for his language and his voice indicated that he was an educated man.

"We had no boat, and we could not get across the river to the creek," added Christy, to increase the confidence of the leader of the expedition. "But we saw a boat half a mile up the river, and we will come off there, if you say so."

"All right; come on board as soon as you can," added Captain Carboneer, as he walked away from the gangway.

Mindful of the peril of the situation, Christy walked leisurely back from the river, and soon joined Mr. Watts, who had been near enough to hear the conversation between the captain and the midshipman.

"That was done very handsomely, Christy," said the steward.

"There was no great difficulty in handling such a matter when one knew all about the plot as I did. The fault on the other side was that they did not examine the cabin of the Florence before they discussed their plans in the standing-room," re-

plied Christy, as he unfastened his horse, and sprang upon his back. "I have no time to spare now."

"There is nothing more to be done here, I believe," added Mr. Watts.

"Not a thing. You can ride back to the place where the Roman candles are planted, and you need not hurry about it, for the Vampire don't make more than four miles an hour. Now be particular to carry out my instructions to the letter, Mr. Watts; and you can see that a great deal depends upon which signal you may have occasion to give," added the midshipman.

"I understand what I am to do perfectly, and I will do my duty faithfully, you may be sure," replied the steward, as he mounted his horse.

Christy did not wait for him, but put his steed into a dead run on the moment. The road was only a cart-path, and it was so soft that the horse's hoofs made no noise to betray his movements to the enemy. He urged the willing beast to his utmost speed, for he was as much at home in the saddle as he was in the rigging of a ship. Before the Vampire had made another eighth of a mile, he had reached the place where

the boat had been left for his use. What to do with his horse was a question, for the report of the big gun would set him crazy. But he knew that the men must be at the house, and he turned the animal loose, satisfied that he would go to the stable without any guidance.

Springing into the boat, he pulled to the Bellevite. At the accommodation steps, he was challenged by Sampson, who demanded like one in authority who and what he was, for the experience of the evening had greatly sharpened his wits.

"Who is it?" he demanded, in a tone which implied his intention to have a satisfactory answer. "Advance and give the word."

"Give the word!" exclaimed Christy. "I have no word to give."

"Then you can't come on board," replied Sampson dogmatically.

"I am Christy Passford, and I have not heard about any word," protested the midshipman.

"You can't pour molasses down my back again," replied Sampson, with a self-satisfied air.

"Don't be a fool, Sampson," added Christy, as he climbed upon the steps, the lower part of which had been hoisted up.

"I have been a fool once, and I don't mean to be again," replied the sentinel. "On deck, there! Bring a lantern out of the engine-room!"

"Don't bring a lantern in sight!" protested Christy impatiently.

"What's the row there, Sampson?" called Paul Vapoor, mounting the rail, and looking through the darkness at the steps, down which the vigilant sentinel had descended more than half way to the water.

"This fellow says he is Christy Passford; and I don't know whether it is Christy or not," replied Sampson.

"Is that you, Christy?" asked Paul.

"Of course it is," replied the middy. "We are wasting time."

"He hasn't the word," added the sentinel.

"Pass him, Sampson; he is all right," said the engineer; and Christy rushed up the steps, and leaped down upon the deck of the steamer.

"I gave out a word for all who had to leave the ship for any purpose during the evening," Paul explained.

"Never mind that now," interposed the midshipman in command. "Have you plenty of steam on?"

"Enough to give her fifteen knots," replied the engineer. "The cable is buoyed, and the long gun loaded. I believe everything is in perfect order to carry out your instructions, though we did not point the gun when we loaded it, for I thought you would prefer to do that yourself," the engineer reported.

"All right, Paul," added Christy. "The steamer, whose name is the Vampire, is on her way up the river, and I should say she would reach the bend in about half an hour. Mr. Watts is down there, and I have arranged certain signals with him."

The midshipman made a careful examination for himself of the ship.

CHAPTER X

A SHOT FROM THE LONG GUN

Christy Passford, as soon as he found that all the other preparations for the decisive event had been made, turned his attention to the aiming of the long gun. He had practised with it somewhat before; and in the ambitious spirit of a boy, he had often amused himself by sighting over the top of the piece.

There was no sort of duty on board of a vessel, even a war steamer, in which he had not done his best to make himself a proficient. He had done duty as an engineer, and even as a fireman. He had taken his trick at the wheel as a quartermaster, and there was nothing he had not done, unless it was to command a vessel, and he had done that on a small scale. Doubtless he had no inconsiderable portion of a boy's vanity, and he believed that he could do anything that anybody else could do; or if he was satisfied that he

could not, he studied and practised till he did believe it.

Be it vanity or pride, Christy certainly believed in himself to a very liberal extent, though his character was fortunately leavened with a large lump of modesty. What he believed, he believed for himself, and acted upon it for himself; so that he was not inclined to boast of his accomplishments, and permitted others to find out what he was rather than made it known in words himself. But his father had found it necessary to restrain him to some extent, and he had not pushed him forward as rapidly as he might have done till the dread notes of war were heard on the land and the sea; and then he thought it would be wrong to hold him back.

When Christy sighted along the great gun, he believed he could hit the Vampire almost to a certainty; but he was not self-sufficient, and did not often believe that he knew a thing better than any other person, and he was not above taking the advice and instruction of others. It was dark, but Christy had fixed upon an object at the bend below, of which he intended to make use in firing the gun. It was a tree which painted its out-

line on the horizon, and the decisive moment was to come when the Vampire was in range with this tree. He adjusted the gun just as he wanted it, and he was satisfied it would do just what he required of it.

He was not inclined to act on his own judgment and skill alone, and he called Boxie, the old sheet-anchorman, who had been the captain of a gun years before the midshipman was born, and pointed out the tree to him, asking him to sight along the gun. He explained his plan to the old salt, and then asked his opinion.

"You have aimed it too high, Mr. Passford," said the veteran, after he had squinted a long time along the piece.

"How is it otherwise?" asked Christy.

"It is all right, sir; but the shot will pass over the steamer. Drop the muzzle a trifle, and the shot will hull her, if you pull the lockstring at the right time."

"I shall see that the string is pulled at the right time; thank you, Boxie," added Christy, without depressing the gun as the old man suggested, for he had a theory of his own which he intended to carry out.

"But the ship may change her position a trifle," added Boxie.

"Of course, I mean to sight the gun again at the very moment we fire," replied Christy, looking at his watch, though he was obliged to go into the engine-room to see what time it was.

It was after two, and the Vampire had had time enough to make the bend. Christy wondered if Captain Carboneer was not looking for the four men he had promised to put on board of the old steamer; but some promises are better broken than kept, and the midshipman thought this was one of them, though he did not consider the present occasion as any excuse for lies, or the failure to keep his word, in the indefinite future.

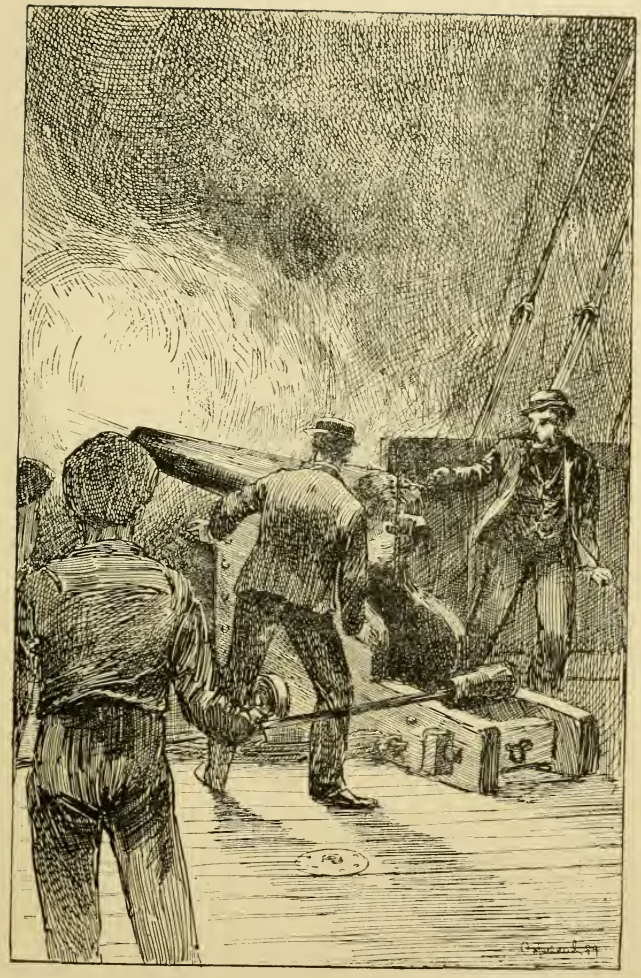
The acting commander of the Bellevite — for such the middy was, and no one disputed his authority — began to be very nervous at the non-appearance of the enemy. He was afraid that some mishap had befallen the Vampire; either that she had gone to the bottom or got aground, though he had heard Captain Carboneer say that he was a pilot for this part of the river.

Christy had mounted the gun carriage ready to take his final aim, and he had been there at least

half an hour. He was watching the point where the Roman candles had been planted, and he had perfect confidence in the judgment and fidelity of Mr. Watts. Boxie was stationed at the lock-string, and held it in his hand, ready to speed the great shot on its errand of destruction; but he hoped the midshipman would depress the muzzle of the gun before he was called upon to pull the string. The other sailors who had served on board of the Bellevite, and had been drilled in handling the guns, were all in their stations, ready to load the piece again as quickly as possible after it had been discharged.

The silence had become intense and painful to all, for apart from the messenger of death and devastation which was about to be hurled at the Vampire, the Bellevite was in danger of being captured, and had a resolute enemy in front of her. The safety of the pet steamer depended upon the skill and judgment of a mere boy, though everybody on board had entire confidence in him. But the supreme moment came soon enough.

A hardly perceptible light at the point he was so closely watching, first attracted the attention of Christy, — perhaps the lighting of the steward's



"Christy sprang to the Gun."—Page 119.

match. An instant later, the fireworks blazed up, and lighted up the smooth surface of the sleeping river. No doubt the conspirators, who had chosen darkness because their deeds were evil, were astounded to see so much light suddenly thrown upon their enterprise.

Christy sprang to the gun, took a hasty sight, which satisfied him that the position of the gun had not changed a particle. As the dark outline of the Vampire passed in range of the selected tree, the midshipman sprang down from the gun-carriage.

"Fire!" shouted he, in a determined though not very loud tone.

It was a tremendous explosion, and the echoes rolled out from the hills as though they were armed with heavy guns, and were taking part in the conflict. Probably the rattling windows and the shaking frames of the houses roused all the sleepers within a mile of the ship.

The Bellevite was enveloped in the smoke from the discharge, and though Christy mounted the carriage again to obtain a better view, he could see nothing, for there was not wind enough to sweep it away at once. But the young com-

mander watched, with almost as much interest and anxiety as before, the signal station he had established. But there was no occasion for desperate haste, for the gun was ready for use a second time if the first shot had failed to do its work. On the other hand, if the Vampire was disabled, she would stay where she was, or drift down the river with the turn of the tide, and it was just about "full sea" at this time.

The smoke was very aggravating to the midshipman, but he could not help himself. The light air swept it away in time, and, with his strained eyes, Christy discovered that two Roman candles were burning at the signal station.

"Did you hit her, Christy?" asked Paul Vapoor, leaping on the gun-carriage.

"I did," replied the midshipman, trying to control a certain feeling of exultation that took possession of his mind, for he did not consider that some of the party below might have been killed by the shot.

"I suppose you don't know anything about the effect of the shot yet?" added Paul.

"I only know that the Vampire is disabled."

"How do you know that, for I can't see anything?"

"Do you see those two blue lights burning at the side of the river?" asked Christy, as he pointed to the place.

"I see them, and they light up the river like a flash of lightning."

"They mean that the steamer is disabled; and for that reason she can't come any nearer than she is now."

"But those villains will make their way to the shore, and there are boats enough about here to enable them to get alongside, and lay us aboard. This is not the end of the affair," said the engineer, very seriously.

"Decidedly not; but I hope to have further information in the course of a few minutes," replied Christy.

"Bellevite, ahoy!" shouted some one on shore.

"That is Mr. Watts; send Sampson on shore after him, and we shall soon know the condition of affairs on board of the Vampire," added the midshipman. "I told the steward to ride up as fast as he could after he had satisfied himself that the steamer was disabled."

Sampson was gone but a few minutes, during which time Christy and Paul consulted in regard

to the next step to be taken, and the question was promptly decided. The boat in which Sampson had gone to the shore returned not only with the steward, but also with Mrs. Passford and Miss Florry.

"What does this mean, mother?" asked Christy, astonished to see his mother and sister come on board.

"It means that we were alarmed, and could not stay in the house any longer," said Florry, taking it upon herself to answer.

"Your father has not come home yet, Christy, and I don't think he will come to-night, for he said he might not be able to return in the last train," added Mrs. Passford. "We came down to the shore with two of the men, and saw Mr. Watts when he arrived on the horse."

"And I shall take the responsibility of having advised the ladies to go on board of the Bellevite," interposed the steward.

"But you have not reported upon the condition of the enemy after the shot hit the Vampire, Mr. Watts," said Christy, impatiently.

"The shot struck her walking-beam, smashed it all to pieces, and cleaned it off completely. Of

course, that disabled her. Very likely some of the party on board of the Vampire are hurt, for the pieces did not all drop into the water."

"Now, in regard to the ladies?" suggested the midshipman.

"It is for you to decide, Mr. Passford, whether or not the enemy are likely to renew the attempt to capture the steamer. But it seemed to me, whether they do anything more or not, it is not quite safe for the ladies to be alone in the house with the servants, for these fellows will be prowling about here in either case."

"I would not stay in the house for all the world!" protested Miss Florry; and probably she thought that one of the prowlers would be Major Pierson.

"You are quite right, Mr. Watts; I was not as thoughtful as you were," replied Christy, who took in the situation with this suggestion. "What were they doing on board of the Vampire, Mr. Watts?"

"I did not wait to observe their movements, but the boat began to drift down the river."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Passford, but the ship is swinging around, and you will not be able to use

that gun as it points now," said Boxie, touching his hat to the young commander.

"Stand by your engine, Paul; we will get under way at once. Boxie, cast off the cable, and let it run out. You buoyed it, did you not?" said Christy, with a sudden renewal of energy, as he hastened to the pilot-house, where Beeks and Thayer had been sent before.

"I buoyed the cable, sir," replied the sheet-anchorman.

"Then cast it off. Sampson, open the cabin for the ladies," added Christy, as he disappeared in the pilot-house.

But the ladies preferred to go into the engine-room.

CHAPTER XI

THE BATTLE ALONGSIDE THE BELLEVITE

The signal lights at the bend of the river had burned out, and nothing could be seen in that direction. The turn of the tide had carried the wreck of the Vampire, if she was a wreck, down the stream, and beyond what the steward had reported, nothing was known in regard to her. Mr. Watts possessed himself of the single fact that her walking-beam had been carried away by the shot, and he had not waited to ascertain anything more. She was disabled, and he had been instructed to hasten up the river as soon as he had assured himself of this fact, and made the signal.

As the extent of the calamity to the enemy was unknown, the young commander began to have some painful doubts in regard to the immediate future. He had given the order to slip the cable, and he could hear the rattle of the chain as it passed out through the hawse-hole. It was evi-

dent enough to him that he had to run the gantlet of the party on board of the Vampire in descending the river. As the shot had hit the walking-beam of the steamer, it was not probable that she was seriously injured in her hull, if at all.

Some of the enemy had doubtless been hurt by the fall of the pieces of machinery, but Christy could not believe that the conspirators were disabled, as the vessel was. The enemy might make an attempt to board the Bellevite as she passed down the river, for the accident must have rendered the party more desperate than before. In the face of a failure to capture the Bellevite at her anchorage, which had seemed so easy a matter to the leaders of the expedition, they would be ready to take any chances of success that came in their way.

"Cable all out, sir," reported Boxie.

Not without some heavy doubts, Christy rang the bell to go ahead. He had no one in the pilot-house with whom he could consult except the two quartermasters, for Paul was in charge of the engine, and he could no more leave it than the midshipman could leave the wheel. The propeller

began to turn, and the ship gathered headway. To add to the responsibility of the young commander, his mother and sister had just come on board, and were now seated on the sofa in the engine-room.

The Bellevite was moving down the river, and the only thing Christy could do was to brace himself up to meet whatever might happen on the trip. He did this at once, and a moment later he rang to go ahead at full speed. He was approaching the bend of the river, and in a minute or two more he would be able to see the Vampire. But Captain Carboneer could no more see through the headland at the bend than he could, and he hoped that the leader of the enemy had not yet discovered that the Bellevite was under way.

The steamer increased her speed on the instant in response to the signal, and she rushed forward at a velocity that would be fatal to the Vampire if she happened to be in her path. But Christy was not disposed to make an issue with the enemy when they met; he intended to defend the Bellevite, if she was attacked, to the extent of his ability and small force.

"There she is!" exclaimed Beeks, as the Belle-

vite began to change her course to go around the bend.

Christy saw the Vampire as soon as the quartermaster, and he was glad to find that she had drifted to the left bank of the river as far as the depth of water would permit. As her engine was disabled, she had no means of propulsion with which she could help herself. It was not improbable that she was aground. She was not armed with a single heavy gun, or with any gun, and she was entirely harmless.

Christy breathed more freely when he realized the situation of the Vampire. Probably she was provided with one or more boats, and it was possible that Captain Carboneer might attempt to board the Bellevite as soon as he discovered her. The deck of the steam-yacht was not very far above the water, and if a boat full of desperate men could get alongside of the ship, it would not be a very difficult matter for them to mount the side.

"Port a little," said Christy to the quartermasters at the wheel. "Keep her well over to the west shore. Steady."

A moment later the steamer had her course for passing the Vampire, and Christy left the pilot-

house to obtain a better view of the situation and movements of the enemy. It was not so dark as to prevent him from seeing all that was going on upon her deck, for the Bellevite had to pass within pistol-shot of her to avoid getting aground on the edge of the channel.

Sampson and the rest of the old ship's company gathered near him, where they could see over the rail. The oiler, as Paul Vapoor had instructed him to do, had armed all these men with a cutlass and a revolver, and very likely some or all of them would have been glad to make use of them.

"They are loading into a boat on the port side of the Vampire, sir, and it looks as though they intended to do something without delay," said Sampson; and, as the steamer had come about since she was disabled, this was the side nearest to the shore.

"I see that they are hurrying some movement with all their might," replied the midshipman, watching with the most intense interest the operations of the enemy. "Sampson, get out half a dozen sixty-pound, solid shot, and put them on the plankshear, twenty feet apart. Take all hands with you, and hurry up."

The oiler asked no questions, though he might have been excused for wondering what the young commander intended to do with shot without powder. In a few minutes the shot were in place, as Christy had directed. The midshipman was watching with all his eyes the movement of the enemy, and, as the Bellevite approached the position of the wreck, the boat darted out from the other side of her. It began to be exciting for the middy, loaded with the responsibility of the safety of the steamer, though he seemed to be as cool as Boxie himself, who had seen some sea fights in his day.

Christy leaped on the rail of the ship, where he could obtain a full view of the situation. The boat was approaching with all the speed the oarsmen could command, and they seemed to be experienced hands. There could be no doubt of the intentions of the enemy, and the midshipman drew his heavy naval revolver from his pocket.

"Stand by to repel boarders!" he called to the seamen. "Pass up one of those shot, Sampson. Have a hand mount the rail, each with a shot, at the points where you have placed them."

"The ladies wish to know what is going on, Christy," said Paul, coming from the engine-room.

"I have no time to talk now," replied Christy impatiently, as he saw the approaching boat within ten feet of the side of the steamer. "Tell them to stay where they are, and not come on deck!"

The boat was not a large one, and it did not contain more than a dozen men; but the fine form of Captain Carboneer could be seen, as he stood up in the stern sheets. Those who were not pulling the oars began to discharge revolvers at the men now mounted on the rail; but the motion of the boat and the ship seemed to defeat their aim, and no one was hit so far as was known.

"When the boat comes alongside, let the man who is in the right place for it drop his shot into it. Be careful of it, and don't waste the iron," shouted Christy, when the decisive moment came.

"All ready, sir," responded the men along the rail.

"You are the man, Boxie! You are in the right place for the first shot," added the midshipman.

Boxie was next to him, and it would be Christy's turn next if the old man failed to do good work with his shot. The boat came along-

side, and a bowman fastened his boathook at the side of the ship, and held it in place. At the same moment Boxie let drive his sixty-pound shot; but he ought to have waited an instant longer, for the missile dropped harmlessly into the river.

The bowman had not obtained a good hold, and he lost it, so that the boat began to drift astern. Captain Carboneer shouted his orders, and the man got a new hold, and this time it was at the painter of the boat in which Sampson had brought off Mr. Watts and the ladies. It had been forgotten in the excitement of the moment, but the rope afforded a good hold to several men who had grasped it.

At this thrilling moment, a man wearing a frock-coat discharged a revolver at Christy, who was standing on the rail above him, and then, seizing the painter in the hands of the men, he climbed briskly to the accommodation steps, which had been hoisted up, but not taken on board.

Christy was in the most dangerous position on board, for he seemed to be the target for all who could use their revolvers. But the young commander was not asleep, though he had given no order for the last minute or two. The boat was

directly under him, and he had put his pistol in his hip-pocket, in order to take up the solid shot at his feet. It was heavy, but he lifted it over his head without any difficulty, and launched it into the boat with all the force he could give to it.

"On deck, there! Let go that painter!" shouted Christy, as he pitched his missile from his hands.

He was in a position so favorable for the operation that he could not well miss his aim, and the shot crashed through the bottom of the boat, carrying down one of the enemy with it. It did not make a round hole in the bottom of the boat, it was afterwards ascertained, as it might if it had been fired from one of the broadside guns, but it tore off the planking, and made a hole as big as the head of a flour-barrel.

"Lay hold of that man on the accommodation ladder!" shouted Christy, without waiting to observe the effect of his shot, for the man who had succeeded in mounting the side was armed with a dangerous weapon, which he was likely to use as soon as he found the opportunity.

The men forward of the point where the boat had come alongside had been ordered aft, and a

couple of them dragged the venturesome officer, as his frock-coat indicated that he was, to the deck. Christy was almost sure this man was Haslett, who had certainly set a bold example to his companions in the boat. He was quickly secured, and by no gentle hands. His hands were tied behind him, and he was made fast to the rail, where he was likely to be harmless during the rest of the trip.

It was no easy matter for a boat to make fast to a steamer going ten knots an hour at least, and if the painter of the boat had not been carelessly left where it could be of service to the assailants, the affair would have ended with Boxie's unsuccessful cast of the shot. But as soon as the painter was let go, an order which Sampson hastened to execute, the enemy's hold upon the ship was lost, though they were using boathooks and other implements to make sure of their grasp. The boat was left behind by the ship, though not till the hole had been stove in her bottom.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Passford, for missing my heave with the shot," said Boxie, on the deck; and the veteran's heart seemed to be almost broken by his failure.

"You are very excusable, Boxie; one can't expect to hit every time, and you did very well," replied Christy, who had suddenly passed from painful doubt and uncertainty to exultation and exaltation at the victory achieved. "We are all right now."

"But the enemy are not," added Sampson, who had mounted the rail after he had secured the prisoner. "They are all afloat."

"They will get ashore in some way, or back to the Vampire," replied Christy, and he descended to the deck, and hastened to the engine-room.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRISONER OF WAR

"WHAT in the world have you been doing, Christy?" asked Mrs. Passford, as her son entered the engine-room; and her anxiety was visible in her tones and looks as she spoke.

"We have been repelling boarders, mother," replied the middy, his face wreathed in smiles.

"What do you mean by that, my son?" inquired his mother.

"Well, mother, you are the daughter of a distinguished naval officer, and it seems to me you must understand what repelling boarders means," answered the young commander, laughing merrily; and no one in the engine-room could fail to see that he was in the highest state of exhilaration, now that the safety of the ship had been assured.

"Of course, I know what it means," added the lady.

"And I don't mean boarders at the hotel, who

are repelled by strong butter and tough steaks," chuckled Christy.

"I wish you would explain yourself, my son."

"I will, mother mine. The fellows we fired at when we were at anchor have just attempted to board the Bellevite, and thus obtain possession of her, as they failed to do in Mobile Bay, as well as at our anchorage in the Hudson." And he proceeded to explain in detail all that had occurred on board and alongside.

"My dear boy, I had no idea that you had been engaged in a battle!" exclaimed the fond mother.

"It wasn't much of a battle, though a good many pistol-shots were fired at us; but a sixty-pound shot did the business on our side, and we left the enemy, or a portion of them, paddling in the river, and trying to keep their heads above water. But I must not stay here, for I have to look out for the steering of the ship," continued Christy, as he moved towards the door.

"You whipped them out, did you, midshipman?" added the engineer.

"We did; and there isn't any doubt of it. I shouldn't wonder if some of them had lost the number of their mess. But I think it is settled

for the present that Captain Carboneer don't go to sea in the Bellevite. By the way, I had forgotten that we took a prisoner, and perhaps he will be willing to tell us something more about his enterprise."

"Who is the prisoner?" asked Mrs. Passford.

"He is an officer, I judge, for he wore a frock-coat."

"The party could not have had a great many officers. It was not the captain, was it?"

"No; I am sure it is not he. I think it must be the naval officer whom Captain Carboneer called Haslett; but I have not seen him except as he was shinning up the painter of the boat. You can go on deck if you like, mother and Florry, or you may come with me into the pilot-house," added Christy.

The engineer had to remain on duty, and Miss Florry mildly objected to leaving her present comfortable position on the sofa of the engine-room; but as her mother wished to go with her brother, she felt obliged to go with her.

Christy gave his mother and sister places on the sofa abaft of the wheel, and then looked into the position of the steamer. But the two quartermas-

ters had so often steered the steamer up and down the river that they had done very well, and there was no especial need of the midshipman as a pilot. The Bellevite was not going at anything like her best speed, or at her usual rate at sea. As she was going, it was about a four-hours' run to New York, and Christy was not in a hurry to get to his destination.

"Beeks, we have a prisoner, and I should like to take his measure," said Christy to the senior quartermaster. "You may go aft and ask Sampson to bring him into the pilot-house."

"Bring him into the pilot-house," repeated the man, as he left the apartment.

"What are you going to do with your prisoner, Christy?" asked Mrs. Passford.

"I shall hand him over to the proper officers, and they can do what they please with him," replied the middy. "I don't want him: do you, mother?"

"What should I want of him?"

"Perhaps you want him, Florry?" asked Christy of his sister.

"I am sure I don't," she replied, pouting.

"Perhaps you will want him when you have seen him," added the middy roguishly.

At this moment Sampson appeared at the door of the pilot-house, conducting his prisoner, whose hands were still tied behind him. Christy did not see him at first, for he was looking at his sister; but her pretty face suddenly turned crimson, and her brother heard the sound of footsteps in the apartment.

As soon as he saw the prisoner, he started back in astonishment, though perhaps there was no particular reason to be surprised. It was not Mr. Haslett, as he had supposed, and it certainly was not Captain Carboneer. But it was Major Lindley Pierson, late commandant of Fort Gaines. Christy had not expected to meet him, and that was the only reason why he was astonished.

"Major Pierson!" exclaimed the midshipman, as soon as he had in some degree recovered from his astonishment. "I believe we have met before somewhere."

"Without a doubt we have, Captain Passford," replied the major, who no longer belonged to the Mulgate family.

"Not a captain, if you please; but I am none the less glad to see you on that account. This is really a very unexpected pleasure."

"And quite as unexpected to me, I assure you, especially to meet the ladies," added the prisoner as he bowed low to Mrs. Passford and her daughter. "I had hoped I might meet Mrs. and Miss Passford before I returned to the South."

"And you had even hoped to take one of them back with you as a passenger in the Bellevite," Christy interpolated, with great good nature.

Major Pierson looked at him with a start, and it was his turn to be astonished. He was a prisoner, but he had the privilege of wondering how Christy knew so much about his affairs.

"Captain Carboneer is a very obstinate man, and did not take kindly to the carrying of lady passengers in a man-of-war; but I think he was right, though my view may be of no consequence to you," added the young officer. "I have the highest opinion of Captain Carboneer, for he is a solid, substantial man. By the way, Major Pierson, who is he?"

"He is Captain Carboneer," replied the major discreetly.

"Perhaps he is Captain Carboneer; I don't know: things are not always what they seem, and

I find that persons are not, either. Hasn't that been your experience, Mr. Mulgate — I beg your pardon, Major Pierson?"

The prisoner frowned, and gave a fierce glance at the midshipman, as though he felt like annihilating him with a look. But he evidently considered just then that he was in the presence of the ladies, and perhaps that the flash of his eagle eye would not kill his tormentor, as the young man seemed to have become.

"I am your prisoner, or somebody's prisoner, Captain Passford; and the tables are turned against me. Of course, you don't expect me to give information that will be of use to the enemies of my country."

"Of course not."

"When you were my prisoner, I think I treated you like a gentleman," added Major Pierson.

"I think you did, sir; and that reminds me that your hands are tied behind you. You were so kind as to release me from my bonds when I was in your power" —

"And it was the stupidest thing I ever did in my life," interposed the prisoner, with some bitterness.

"I am not familiar with the events of your life, and I cannot gainsay your remark."

"You did not scruple to turn our own guns against us."

"As you would have done if you had succeeded in capturing the Bellevite," added Christy, smartly. "This time makes twice that you did not capture her."

"The third time may not fail."

"It may not; but I must be as magnanimous as you were. Sampson, release the gentleman."

"Thank you, Captain Passford; that is no more than I did for you when you were in the same situation."

"But I suppose you will not undertake to capture this ship after I have done as well by you as you did by me. I intend to treat you like a gentleman, though the fortunes of war are against you. Now, perhaps you will not object to answering a question or two, in which there can be no treason."

"I must be my own judge of the questions," replied the major, rather haughtily.

"Certainly, sir; and I shall not insist upon your answering any question. Was any one on board of the Vampire killed in this affair?"

"No one was killed."

"Were any wounded?"

"I am sorry to say that three were injured by the falling of the pieces of the walking-beam."

"Seriously?"

"Two slightly, and one severely."

"Thank you, major."

"Of course, I am not informed of the fate of those in the boat when it was sunk," added the prisoner.

"I think no one was badly hurt in that part of the affair," said Christy.

"Perhaps it will be of interest to you to know that Private Passford, formerly of my command, was the one who was severely wounded on board of the Vampire."

"Corny!" exclaimed Mrs. Passford.

"I am sorry to say that he was struck on the shoulder by a fragment of the machinery," replied the major, very politely, as he bowed low to the lady.

"Poor Corny!" ejaculated Miss Florry. "Is he very badly wounded, Major Pierson?"

"I do not know how seriously, but I am afraid he cannot use that shoulder for a long time,"

replied the prisoner, fixing a look of admiration upon her, as if he were glad to have the privilege of looking at her without causing any remark.

"I am so sorry for him. Corny was always real good to me when I have been at Glenfield," added the fair girl, and she actually shed some sympathetic tears as she thought of his wounded shoulder. "Can we not do something for him, mother?"

"I shall be very glad to have him removed to the house, and I will take care of him till he gets well. I don't know whether this can be done or not. Perhaps Major Pierson can inform me."

"If your kind hearts prompt you to do this for one who is in arms against the government, I have no doubt it can be managed. He can give his parole, and that will make it all right."

"He is my nephew, and I would do as much for him as I would for my own son," replied Mrs. Passford heartily.

"And I as much as I would for my brother," added Miss Florry.

Everything was pleasant so far, though all the Passfords were worried about poor Corny, who had been with the ladies only the evening before.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTER THE BATTLE

It was six o'clock in the morning when the Bellevite let go her anchor off Twentieth Street, as the young commander decided to do after some consultation with Paul Vapoor, who was his senior in years if not in wisdom. He did not suppose the steamer would be allowed to anchor at the Navy Yard without orders to that effect. His father had not returned from the city. Though he held no office, Captain Passford was as busy with public affairs as though he had been the collector of the port.

No one but the ladies had slept any during the trip; but they had been on deck some time when the steamer anchored. Christy had been very much in doubt as to what he should do with the Bellevite when he reached his destination, and he was glad to see his mother when she came out of the cabin. Though he was still hardly more than

a boy, he believed in his mother, and it had not yet occurred to him that he knew more than she did. He stated his difficulty to her, for Paul had been as much in doubt as the midshipman.

"I think it is a very easy question to answer, Christy," replied Mrs. Passford, with a smile. "Where have you anchored?"

"Off Union Square, or very near it, I should think," replied Christy.

"You know that your father stays at the St. James Hotel when he is in the city," she added. "The only thing you can do is to find him, and let him decide what is to be done with the Bellevite."

"I did not think of that," added the midshipman. "I will get out a boat at once, and go on shore."

"Florry and I will go with you," continued Mrs. Passford. "We have nothing to do here, and I should like to return to Bonnydale as soon as possible. But what will you do with your prisoner, Christy?"

"I shall do nothing with him. Sampson is in charge of him, and I am sure he will not take his eye off the major while he remains on board."

The port-quarter boat was lowered into the water, and a couple of the old sailors took their places in her. The ladies were assisted to their seats, and Christy, after he had informed the engineer that he was in command during his absence, leaped into the boat, and it was pulled to the nearest pier. A carriage was called, and the party were driven to the hotel. It was half-past six, and Christy was informed that his father had not yet come down. Word was sent up to him, and the son went to his room, where he found him only half dressed.

"I did not expect to see you at this time in the morning, my son," said the owner of the Bellevite. "How did you come down so early?"

"I came in the Bellevite; and she is at anchor in the stream off Twentieth Street, father," replied Christy.

"In the Bellevite!" exclaimed Captain Passford, with the nearest thing to a frown that ever appeared on his brow in the presence of any member of his family. "I don't quite understand how"—

"An attempt was made to capture her last night, father, and I thought it best to make sure of her," interposed the midshipman.

"To capture her!" ejaculated Captain Passford, suspending his toilet, and gazing into the face of his son. "I think you must have dreamed that, Christy."

"Perhaps I did, father; but we captured one prisoner of rank in my dream, and he is on board now, closely guarded by Sampson," replied Christy, laughing in his excitement. "Mother and Florry were on board, and they are down in the parlor waiting to see you."

"Do you mean that an attempt was really made to capture the Bellevite last night?" asked the captain, as if unable to credit the astounding intelligence.

"Of course I can prove all I say by many witnesses. Mr. Watts is on board, and he has been dreaming too if I have. Paul Vapoor is another dreamer, to say nothing of eight or ten more on board," added Christy.

Captain Passford completed dressing himself about as quick as he had probably ever done since he became a millionnaire, and attended Christy down to the parlor, where he gave his wife and daughter an affectionate reception.

"But our boy tells me that some one has been

trying to obtain possession of the Bellevite, Julia; and it seems to me hardly possible that such an attempt should be made so far up the river," said Captain Passford, as soon as he was able to allude to the subject.

"But it is quite true, Horatio; and our boy has behaved like a hero, if he is our son," replied the lady, bestowing a glance of pride upon the midshipman.

"He says he has a prisoner on board," added the captain.

"And who do you think that prisoner is, Horatio?" asked Mrs. Passford.

"Is it Jeff Davis?" he inquired, with a smile.

"Not exactly; but it is Major Lindley Pierson."

"Indeed? Then I begin to see through the matter," replied Captain Passford. "He failed to obtain the steamer in Mobile Bay, and he came up here after her. But I should like to hear the particulars of this affair."

"And poor Corny Passford was wounded in the shoulder," said Florry, who had hardly spoken before.

"You don't mean that you had a fight,

Christy?" demanded the captain, looking quite serious.

"Not much of a fight, father; we fired the long gun once, and disabled an old steamer, and we sunk a boat that was trying to lay us aboard."

"Then it was a more serious affair than I had supposed."

"But, father, I think we had better be going on board; and I can tell you the story on the way just as well as here," suggested Christy.

"But you must have your breakfast before you go, for there is nothing to eat on board of the steamer," replied Captain Passford, as he led the way down into the restaurant.

While they were waiting for the meal to be served, the captain went to the house of a military officer, with whom he was intimately acquainted, and requested him to take the prisoner off his hands. After the meagre details of the affair he gave, the officer offered to put a company on board of the steamer for her protection; but the captain thought this was unnecessary.

After the breakfast, the party took a carriage for the pier. On the way the captain ordered a supply of cooked provisions to be sent down to the

boat for the use of the men on board of the Bellevite. With this supply the party went on board. On the way Christy had told his story, and by the time they went on board Captain Passford had learned all about the affair.

He had received the order to deliver the steamer at the Navy Yard on the following Monday, and he decided to return to Bonnydale in her. Enough of the former members of the ship's company could be obtained in a few hours to hold the vessel against any enemy that was likely to appear in the river. As the owner was now on board, the engineer put on full steam, and she reached her anchorage, as indicated by the buoy of the cable which had been slipped. It was hauled in, and the Bellevite was replaced in her former position.

The tremendous report of the great gun in the small hours of the morning had startled all the people in the vicinity, though it was not till they left their beds that the news was conveyed to them. A party in the town just below the scene of the disaster to the Vampire had been collected, and they had taken a steamer to explore the river in search of the bold actors in the affair, as soon

as the facts were known in the vicinity. The steamer had been running up and down the river since six in the morning.

When the Bellevite passed up the river, she was promptly recognized by the investigating party on board of the Alert, which followed the steamer up to her anchorage. She came alongside some time after the crew had fished up the cable; but Captain Passford warned her to keep off as soon as he discovered her intention to come alongside. She was a small steamer, and had at least twenty men on her deck, so that the captain thought it necessary to learn her object before she came any nearer.

A boat with two men was sent from the Alert, and one of them was permitted to come on board. This one proved to be Captain Mainhill, with whom the owner of the Bellevite was well acquainted. He was a wealthy and patriotic man, though rather too old to be engaged in active service for his country.

"I thought you might be representatives of the Southern Confederacy, and I was rather shy of you," said Captain Passford, as he took the hand of his neighbor. "I should not have been so cautious if I had met you last evening."

"We have been looking for the gentlemen who were engaged in this attempt to capture the Bellevite," added Captain Mainhill.

"I hope you have found them, or some of them," replied the owner.

"Only a single one of them; and he is badly wounded. We have scoured the river for miles without finding any trace of the enemy. I think they landed on the east shore, and went over to the railroad, where they probably took the first train that came along," replied Captain Mainhill.

"Of course, they saw the Bellevite going down the river, and perhaps they have gone down to New York to finish the job they begun here," suggested Captain Passford. "Do you know if the enemy lost any of their number when the boat was smashed?"

But Captain Mainhill knew nothing about the affair on the river beyond the fact that an attempt had been made to capture the Bellevite, and he had not ascertained that more than one was injured.

"We found the Vampire aground half a mile below where the shot disabled her," continued the leader of the expedition. "Her machinery was

badly smashed. She never was good for much, and she is good for nothing now."

"Did the enemy carry off the one who was wounded?" asked Captain Passford, prompted by his wife.

"No; he seems to have been too badly damaged for that: they left him at the house of a workingman near the river, and I suppose he is there now," replied Captain Mainhill. "I don't know that there is anything more that we can do, and we may as well go home to breakfast."

"Do you know where the wounded person is to be found?" asked Captain Passford.

"I do; and I have seen him. He is suffering a good deal of pain; but he is as plucky as a mad snake, and he would not say a word in answer to my questions."

"I shall be greatly obliged to you, Captain Mainhill, if you will land me as near as you can to the house where this wounded man is, and show me where it is. Mrs. Passford will go with me," said the owner.

"Very glad indeed to do it," replied the leader of the searching party.

Captain Passford instructed some of the men

on board to summon all the former ship's company of the Bellevite on board at once that could be found, and then went on board of the Alert with his wife. They were landed in a boat just below the bend, and Captain Mainhill conducted them to the house where Corny was said to be.

They found him there, and the poor fellow was glad enough to see them. No doctor had been called, and nothing had been done to alleviate his pain; but he was immediately removed to the mansion at Bonnydale, with his own consent, and Dr. Linscott was sent for.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BEGINNING OF A CHASE

Major Pierson still remained on board of the Bellevite, for no officer had been sent on board for him, as expected; and he was under the efficient care of Sampson. He was subjected to no restraint, and he took his breakfast with the engineer. But he was not a welcome visitor on board, and Captain Passford would have been very glad to get rid of him.

The owner sought him the next time he came on board, when he was not so busy as he had been before. But he said nothing to him about his mission at the North, and treated him as a guest rather than a prisoner. For reasons of his own, though not difficult to conjecture, he was very anxious to make a good appearance before the father of Miss Florry, and he was a gentleman in his manners.

"Major Pierson, I am sorry to do anything that

may be unpleasant to you, but I have not the means of holding you as a prisoner," said the captain, after they had been talking of indifferent subjects for a time.

"I realize that I am a prisoner of war, subject to such restraint as my captors impose upon me," replied the major.

"If you will allow yourself to be paroled, it will settle your status for the present," added Captain Passford.

"As a guest at your house?" asked the major, his face suddenly brightening up. "I shall be very happy to give my parole."

"Not at my house, if you please, Major Pierson; it would not be convenient at the present time," replied the owner, astonished at the suggestion.

"Then you will excuse me if I decline to accept a parole," replied the prisoner, biting his lip as though he was not pleased with the reply. "As a guest in your house, I should not wish you to have any solicitude in regard to me."

"Very well, major; I cannot object to your decision," added the captain, as he touched his hat and left the prisoner to the attentions of Sampson.

He was kept on board of the Bellevite, now re-enforced by the return of about twenty of her former crew, so that regular watches were kept, and there was no chance for the prisoner to escape, and none for Captain Carboncer to capture the steamer. Dr. Linscott soon relieved Corny of his pain, but it was many weeks before he was fit to leave the house, and then he was paroled. Captain Passford could never ascertain what had become of the crew intended for the Bellevite, though it was supposed, as they separated, that they found their way to some port where they could ship for their chosen service.

On the Monday following the attempt to capture her, the Bellevite was taken to the Navy Yard, and she was prepared for service. It was understood that her former officers and crew would be appointed to her, for they were accustomed to the vessel, and could do better with her than any other. Paul Vapoor and Christy Passford had already received their commissions and orders. Captain Breaker had been restored to his former rank, and was to be the commander of the Bellevite.

It was two months before the ship was ready to

go into commission. Important alterations had been made below, and the armament had been taken from her deck, substituting for it a Parrot midship piece, of eight-inch bore, and carrying a one hundred and fifty pound shot, two sixty-pounders, and two thirty-pounders. This was a heavy armament, but the ship was strong enough to bear it.

Joel Dashington and Ethan Blowitt were appointed as masters, and were to be the first and second lieutenants, while Christy Passford was the third. Leon Bolter was made a first assistant engineer, and Fred Faggs the second. Sampson obtained his place as a first-class fireman, with the expectation of soon becoming an assistant engineer, for he was well qualified for the position.

Captain Passford, though he had offered his services in any capacity in which he might be needed, had been induced to withdraw his application for the reason that he could be of more service to the cause at home than he could in the field or at sea. He was a man of influence, and he was needed in civil life. He was even able to do more as an adviser and counsellor than in any public office, though he filled several of the latter in the earlier part of the war. He furnished no inconsiderable

part of the money needed at particular times, and he was only less valuable on account of his money than he was for his patriotism and good judgment.

"Now, Christy, remember that you are an officer of the United States, and make yourself worthy of the place you occupy," said his father to Christy, on the evening of his last day at home. "Study your duty, and then perform it faithfully. Perhaps I can tell you something of more value than good advice is generally considered to be."

"I shall try to follow your good advice, father; and I mean to do my duty; and it will not be for the want of trying if I fail," replied Christy.

"You have sailed with Captain Breaker a great deal when you were in a different relation to him. Now I must warn you that he has his duty to do, and I hope you will not expect to be favored, or ask him for privileges not granted to other officers," continued the late owner of the Bellevite.

"I am sure I expect him to be impartial with his officers."

"I meant to have seen Breaker this afternoon before I came home; but I had not time to go to the ship. For some of my own affairs I have had three agents in England. I wrote them some time

ago to obtain all the information they could in regard to vessels, especially steamers, that cleared for any ports of the British Possessions near the United States," continued Captain Passford, taking a letter from his pocket. "Two weeks ago an iron steamer sailed from a port in Ireland for the Bermudas. This letter will tell you all about it, and you will hand it to Captain Breaker, and give him my explanation."

The midshipman put the letter into his pocket without reading it. In his chamber he looked it over, and found that it meant business, and he was delighted with the idea of having something to do before he reached the port for which the ship was bound, for the inactivity of the blockade was not wholly to his mind. He slept as soundly as usual, for already he had come to regard war as the business in which he was engaged, and he had but little sickly sentiment over it.

It was a tearful parting with his mother and sister before he took the train with his father, and it was a sad one with his father when he went off to the Bellevite in the boat. But neither of them shed any tears, for both felt that they were called upon to discharge their duty to their country.

Captain Breaker had always trained his officers and seamen to perform their duty in conformity with the discipline of the navy so far as it was practicable to do so, and consequently his ship's company were very nearly at home from the beginning of the voyage. He had received his sealed orders, and at noon the Bellevite went down the bay on her mission to the South, though no one on board knew where the ship was bound. The crew had been re-enforced by as many men as she had usually carried, and the first day was a very busy one in putting everything in order. Christy had handed the letter his father had given him to the captain, and after dinner he spoke of it.

"Did you read this letter, Mr. Passford?" asked the captain.

"I did, sir; my father told me to read it," replied Christy.

"It appears that a very fast steamer loaded with a valuable cargo sailed from Belfast eleven days ago, clearing for the Bermudas. We shall all be very happy to pay our respects to her; but I can say nothing till I have opened my orders to-morrow," said Captain Breaker.

"If she sailed eleven days ago from Belfast, she

ought to be well up with the Bermudas, if she is as fast as represented, sir," added Christy, hoping the orders would permit the Bellevite to look out for the Killbright, as she was called.

The next day, as the observations indicated the latitude in which the sealed orders were to be opened, the seal of the official envelope was broken. Captain Breaker read the letter, and a smile came over his bronzed face. The orders were evidently to his satisfaction; and Christy, who was on duty near him, remembered what his father had said to him, and asked no question, as he would have been likely to do under other circumstances. But the commander was kind enough to call his officers to him, and inform them of the duty assigned to the ship.

The government had received information which indicated the approach to our shores of a considerable fleet of blockade runners, and the Bellevite, on account of her reputed fast sailing, was to cruise for a given time off the coast in search of these blockade runners.

"I have no doubt these blockade runners will go into the Bermudas, especially the Killbright. If we go into St. George, we shall not be allowed

to sail till twenty-four hours after this fast vessel leaves," said Captain Breaker. "On the other hand, if we are seen off the port, she will not come out."

"I don't see, then, that we can do anything about it, Captain Breaker," added Mr. Dashington.

"Captain Passford's correspondent thinks the Killbright is intended for the Confederate Navy, and that she is commanded by a naval officer sent out for the purpose," continued the captain.

But no satisfactory measures could be devised for overcoming the difficulties on both hands, and the steamer sped on her way. In two days more she was in sight of the Bermudas. It was almost dark when the lookout sighted a steamer coming out from the islands. By the order of the captain, the engine was stopped, and the steamer rested silently on a calm sea.

"I don't think she has seen us yet," said Captain Breaker. "If she had, she would have come about and run back into the harbor."

"She keeps on her course," added Mr. Dashington.

"If she has the reputation of being a very fast

vessel, very likely she believes that she can run away from us," suggested Mr. Blowitt.

"As I don't believe the vessel floats that can outsail the Bellevite, I shall give her time to get well away from the port before the screw turns again," said the captain.

"Mr. Passford," called he a little later.

"On duty, sir," replied Christy, touching his cap to the commander.

"You will have the midship gun charged with a solid shot, and have it ready for use at once."

As the steamer in the distance still kept on her course, the screw of the Bellevite was started. The chief engineer was called upon deck, and the situation explained to him.

"We shall want all the speed we can get out of her, Mr. Vapoor," said the captain.

"We shall have no trouble in making twenty-two knots, sir, with the sea as it is now," replied the engineer.

"That steamer means to go into the Cape Fear River," said Mr. Blowitt, when the chase had laid her course. "If she was going in at Savannah, or round into the Gulf, she would go more to the south."

"I think you are right; but she has room enough to run away from us if she can," added the captain.

It was a busy time in the fireroom, but there was nothing to do on deck but watch the steamer. She had actually lighted the green light on the starboard, and evidently did not expect to be overhauled, even if her commander had noticed the presence of the Bellevite.

CHAPTER XV

A CHASE OFF THE BERMUDAS

All the officers on board of the Bellevite who had never been in the navy had spent their long vacation in the study and practice of gunnery and naval tactics; and the men had been carefully drilled by a competent officer as soon as they reported for duty. But a considerable number of the latter had served for years on board of men-of-war, and a few were sheet-anchor men. The latter are sailors who have spent the greater part of their lives in the national sea-service, and they were competent to teach many of the junior officers.

Every day after the ship went into commission, both officers and seamen were drilled, and the captain declared that they had all made satisfactory proficiency. He was ready to meet an enemy with them; but then the ship's company of the steam-yacht were of the very best material. They were all intelligent men, and sailors to begin with, so

that the task of qualifying them for active duty was not very laborious.

Christy was even better fitted for his duties than many of the older officers, for he was not only full of enthusiasm, but he was skilful and scientific, as a rule. He neither asked nor expected any favors on account of former relations with the captain and other officers, and he was determined to make his way by merit rather than by favor. Besides, he had already been under fire, and he had an idea how it felt. Though he was as prudent and careful as circumstances might require, he had proved that he was as brave as a lion, and that shot and shell were not likely to drive him from the post of duty.

Every man was in his place at the midship gun, seventeen of them, including the powder-boy, and Christy gave the orders for loading the piece as though he had been in the navy all his life. The other guns, the broadsides, were loaded at the same time. But just now Paul Vapoor was the most important man on board, and he was rapidly making himself felt in the increasing speed of the Bellevite. Captain Breaker estimated that the steamer which had just come out of port was

all of five miles ahead. It was only seven o'clock in the early darkness of this latitude. Whether the chase was the Killbright or not, it was impossible to make out in the darkness.

If it was the Killbright, Captain Passford's correspondent wrote that she was capable of making twenty knots an hour, as she had been built more for speed than anything else, though she could hardly be a profitable commercial venture. But even accepting this speed as the difficulty to be overcome, the Bellevite would probably overhaul her in two or three hours. The engineer felt that his reputation and that of the ship were at stake, and could not think of such a thing as failure in the first actual encounter with the enemy.

"We are gaining on her without the ghost of a doubt, Mr. Passford," said Boxie, who was ready for duty at the gun.

"No doubt of that, Tom Boxie," replied the third lieutenant. "But she is taking it very coolly. She has not yet even put out her lights."

"I suppose you know why she hasn't, Mr. Passford," added the captain of the gun.

"I am sure I don't know," replied Christy. "If I was in command of that steamer, and wanted

to do just what she does, I should not proceed as she does. But I am nothing but a boy."

"But you have got a long head on your shoulders, Mr. Passford, and I should like to know, if you please, what you would do."

"I would put her lights out before I winked twice."

"Right, Mr. Passford!" exclaimed the sheet-anchor man. "I am glad to hear you say that. The trouble with most of the boys is, when they go to sea to fight the battles of their country, they are as reckless as young wildcats."

"I think it is possible to use proper caution without being a coward, Tom Boxie; and my father gave me a lesson on that subject not long ago."

"Eight bells, sir; and that steamer has had a good hour of running so far. I will wager my day's grub that we are two knots nearer to her than when she laid her course," added Boxie, delighted with the situation.

"I have no doubt of it. I think they are beginning to see it on board of her. There go her lights! She has not a ghost of a glow in sight; and I suppose there is going to be some monkey-

ing about it, if she has ascertained that she cannot run away from us."

"Most likely, sir; but this is not a good night to play tricks, for we have a bright night and a smooth sea."

"As that steamer has such a reputation for speed, I have no doubt they put a very valuable cargo on board of her; probably she has a good supply of arms in her hold."

"So much the better for us, Mr. Passford. We don't fight for prize-money, but when a man gets to be as old as I am, a good round sum of money don't come amiss to him. But I am sorry to see that it looks like a change of weather," continued the sheet-anchor man, as he hitched up his trousers, and took a survey of the heavens.

The wind began to come from the west after it had been almost a dead calm since noon. It looked as though a heavy shower was coming up, and clouds of mist and fog swept over the ocean. The usual lookouts had been doubled, but, in spite of all precautions, the Bellevite lost sight of the chase when she could not have been more than a mile from her. But this weather was to be expected in this changeable latitude. Captain

Breaker was as perplexed as any one, however skilful, must have been in the same situation. It was impossible to know what the chase would do, though it was plain enough, since she put out her lights, that she would change her course.

It was over six hundred miles to Cape Hatteras, and she had room enough to manœuvre in any manner she pleased. The change in the weather hardly amounted to a storm, and probably it would be all over in a few hours. But the chase might turn to any point of the compass, and the Bellevite was as likely to pursue in the wrong as the right direction. But the first thing the commander ordered the chief engineer to do was to save his coal; though he held to his course, and the ship continued at a moderate speed till daylight.

As the wise ones had predicted, the shower was of brief duration. As soon as it was light enough to see, and the fog banks had been swept away, a sharp lookout was kept for the chase. If she was ahead, she had outsailed her pursuer; but Captain Breaker was sure she had not done this, for she could not have had confidence enough in her heels to adopt such a course.

"Sail, ho!" yelled a man on the cross-trees, a few minutes later.

"Where away?" called the officer of the deck.

"On the port beam, sir."

Several officers mounted the rigging to obtain a sight of the reported sail. She was at least ten miles off, and no one could make out whether or not it was the chase of the night before. The captain ordered the ship to be headed to the southward, and, after she had gone on this course an hour, there was another hail from the cross-trees.

"Sail is a steamer, sir!" reported the lookout.

With the aid of the spyglasses, a long streak of black smoke could be made out of the dark clouds that were retreating in that direction. A little later it was demonstrated that she was headed for the coast of the United States. Whether it was the chase they sought or not, she needed looking after. The course was laid in a direction to intercept the steamer, for her inky smoke indicated that she was not American.

In another hour she could be very distinctly made out, though the chase had not been so clearly made out the night before as to enable the officers to identify her. Paul Vapoor was in his element

again, and the Bellevite was doing her best. The two vessels were approaching each other, and Boxie suggested that there would be "music" in less than an hour.

The people on board of the strange steamer must have been as much in the dark in regard to the caliber of the naval vessel as those on board of the Bellevite were in respect to their confident rival. The chase was a long craft, it could be seen now, with two masts and two smokestacks, all of which raked in the most dashing style. She was rather low in the water, and, if it had been in the days of the pirates, the stranger would have been a fair ideal of the freebooter's ship.

"She keeps on just as though she intended to mind her own business, and leave the Bellevite to do the same," said Boxie, as Christy took his place near the midship gun.

"I have no doubt the Bellevite knows her business in this case, and that she will attend to it in due time," added the lieutenant.

"Good!" exclaimed the sheet-anchor man, suddenly.

This exclamation was called forth by a flag, which was run up at the peak, and which proved

to be that of the Confederacy as soon as it was spread out to the breeze.

"She is plucky, anyhow," added Christy.

"There is no lack of pluck in the South. But I wonder what she means by setting that rag."

"Beeks, hoist the ensign at the peak," said the captain, and the brilliant banner was spread in the morning air.

"I reckon both sides understand the situation now. I don't know the captain of that craft, but he is an able fellow, and probably got his education in the old navy, and not in the new one, where he is serving now," continued Boxie.

"I think it is easy enough to see what he means," replied Christy. "He ascertained last night that, fast as his vessel is, he cannot outsail the Bellevite; and there is really only one thing he can do, and that is to fight."

The lieutenant had hardly spoken the words before there was a puff of smoke from one side of the chase, and a heavy report came across the water. But the two steamers were still a long distance apart, and the shot fell short, to the satisfaction of the captain. The chase had been obliged to come to in order to bring her gun to

bear, and she had lost a little time in doing so. It could be easily seen on board of both steamers that the Bellevite was gaining rapidly on the other.

"Mr. Passford, I am as sure of capturing that vessel as though I had her now, and I do not wish to injure her any more than is necessary," said Captain Breaker, as he sighted the Parrot, and devoted especial attention to her. "She is a very fast steamer, and she will be very valuable in our navy in picking up just such vessels as she is herself."

Perhaps it was impudence for him to do so, but Christy could not help casting his eye along the gun. All possible precautions were taken to secure a correct aim, and then the lieutenant gave the order to "Fire!"

"Hit her, sir!" shouted one of the lookout men aloft, who could see over the cloud of smoke.

"Where did it strike her?" demanded the captain.

"Right in the broadside, abreast of the forward smokestack, sir! She has stopped her screw!" added the lookout.

"Mr. Dashington, get the ship astern of the

chase at once," continued the captain to the first lieutenant.

This was the work of at least half an hour; but the Bellevite was running for the stern of the other steamer, as though she intended to cut her in two lengthwise. The chase lay helpless on the water, unable to bring her broadside guns to bear on her enemy.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CONFEDERATE STEAMER YAZOO

It was impossible to discover the nature or extent of the injury the chase had received from the shot from the midship gun; but she had been disabled, though it might be but slightly. The Bellevite dashed on, as though impatient to obtain possession of her prey. All the glasses on board were brought to bear on the injured vessel, which all hands regarded as already a prize.

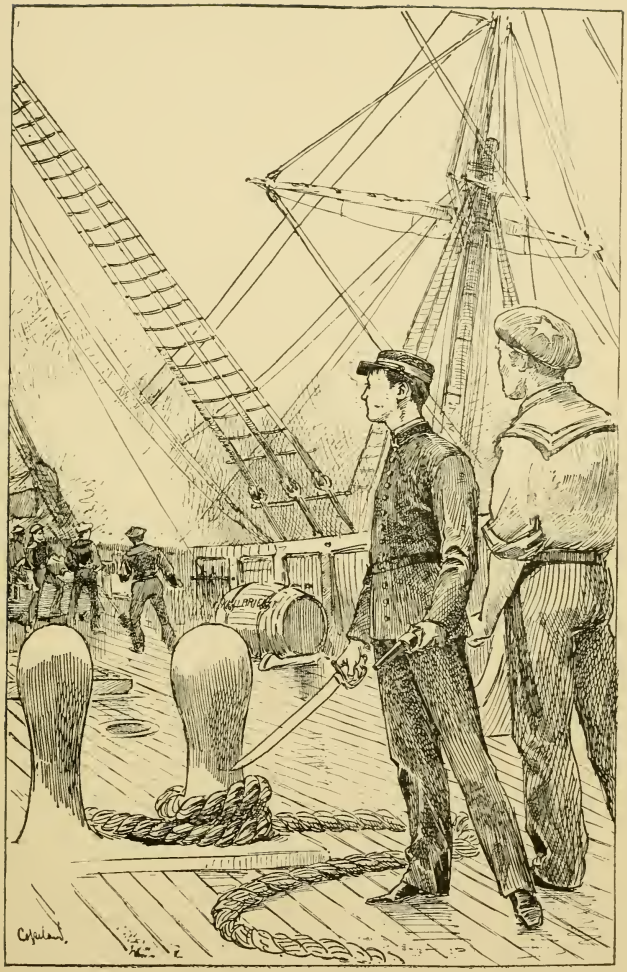
The glasses did not reveal any considerable havoc in the side of the steamer, and the shot hole could easily be plugged when necessary; but the commander of the craft did not yet give up the ship, for he seemed to be engaged in hoisting her foresail and jibs, evidently with the intention of bringing her about so that he could use his guns. The wind was very light, and his chances of accomplishing his purpose were not very brilliant.

"Mr. Dashington, you will call all hands, and be ready to board the prize in three divisions when we run abreast of her," said Captain Breaker. "Let Mr. Passford command the forward division; Mr. Blowitt, the waist; and Mr. Calvert, the quarter."

The boarders were mustered at once, as there was no occasion to fire again at the prize. Each officer arranged his men, and spoke some stirring words to them. Men in the tops were supplied with muskets, and all with revolvers and cutlasses. It was not believed that all this force would be necessary to capture the prize, but there was some evidence that she had a fighting crew on board, and the captain prepared for the worst.

As the Bellevite came nearer to the prize, the sound of hammers was heard, and it appeared that the engineers were engaged in an effort to repair the mischief which had been done to the engine. It was still impossible to see how many men she had on board, but Captain Breaker did not estimate that she had a full ship's company, for vessels intended for war purposes, escaping as this one doubtless had, did not usually take their force on board at the beginning of the cruise.

The three divisions of boarders were all in readi-



"Christy and Beeks on the Steamer's Deck."—Page 181.

ness, and all they feared was that there would be little for them to do on board the enemy. Captain Breaker was in the fore rigging where he could observe all that was done on the decks of both vessels. The Bellevite went ahead with all speed till the signal was given to slow down. The sea was not heavy, and the captain laid her alongside of the prize.

"Do you surrender?" demanded the commander in a loud tone, but with his usual dignity.

"I do not surrender!" replied the captain of the steamer.

"Boarders away!" shouted Captain Breaker.

Christy Passford was the first to leap upon the rail of the other vessel, and then he dropped in the same instant upon her deck. At that moment he was conscious that the steamer under him was moving, though it might be the shaking which the Bellevite gave her when she came alongside. On the deck of the prize, as he still taught himself to consider her, he saw not more than thirty men; and with nearly three times that number on the other side, it did not look as if it could be a very hotly contested battle.

As Christy jumped down from the rail, Beeks

followed him, and he was not a little surprised to find that they were alone. But there was no enemy at hand upon whom he could flesh his cutlass, and he sprang upon the rail again. He found that his impression had been correct, for the vessel was moving. She had already left a gap a dozen feet wide between the Bellevite and herself.

It appeared that the machinery had been repaired, and that it was now capable of doing all that it had done before. The steamer was the Killbright, for the lieutenant saw the name painted in several places about her forward deck. She had suddenly shot ahead very unexpectedly to the captors, as they supposed they were, alongside of her. A puff of wind had been favoring her before, and she darted away towards the northwest. As she began to move, the lock-strings of her port battery were pulled as rapidly as possible.

It would have been impossible to help hitting the Bellevite, with the three guns fired into her at so short a distance. But the cloud of smoke that enveloped both vessels prevented the captain from taking in the situation. The crew of the Killbright were ordered to reload their guns instantly. Whatever was to happen in the near

or distant future, it was evident that the dangerous steamer had not yet been captured, and Christy did not think of her as a prize any more just then.

The Killbright crowded on all the steam she could obtain, and she rapidly increased the distance between herself and the Bellevite. She fired her three broadside guns continually, but it was clear to Christy that the men had not been trained to this business, or they might perhaps have sunk the naval vessel by this time.

The Bellevite fired her two broadside guns, and they made terrible havoc in the upper works of the Killbright. But the strangest thing of all to the young lieutenant, caught on board of the anticipated prize, was that the Bellevite did not go ahead, and give the boarding parties a chance to get on the deck of the enemy.

"I don't understand it, Beeks," said Christy, as he found himself by the side of the quartermaster. "Why don't the ship give chase?"

"I think she must be disabled, sir," replied the warrant officer.

"What could have disabled her?"

"I suppose she might be hit as well as this

vessel," replied Beeks, no better pleased with the situation than his companion in trouble. "They fired three shots into her while she was alongside."

"She must have been hit in a bad place, or she would have been alongside of us before this time. But here we are."

The third lieutenant and quartermaster felt very much like prisoners, though they had no evidence that the Killbright was a ship-of-war, except that she had hoisted the Confederate flag, and fired upon the Bellevite. But the rakish-looking steamer continued on her course, while the Bellevite had not moved since the first broadside. She had already made a mile, and the shots from her enemy did not seem to disable her.

She continued to run with all her speed, and the lieutenant felt the deck quiver as though it was in danger of being shaken out of her. But she was not followed by the Bellevite, and things began to look dark and somewhat cheerless to Christy. The firing came to an end, for the distance was becoming too great for it to be effectual on either side.

"If we had not jumped down from the rail when we boarded, we might have escaped this

scrape," said Beeks, who was even more disgusted than his companion.

"It is no use to growl about it," added Christy, laughing. "Here we are, and we can't help ourselves at present."

"I suppose they will let us go, won't they?" inquired the quartermaster.

"Let us go where?"

"Let us go back where we came from," replied Beeks, who seemed to be quite muddled by his misfortune.

"You don't expect them to put you on board of the Bellevite again, do you?"

"Well, no; not exactly; but this steamer is nothing but a blockade runner, and such craft don't take prisoners."

"I hardly know what she is yet; she is a blockade runner, but she appears to be something more than that. She hoisted the Confederate flag, and her people stood by their guns like brave men. I count myself as a prisoner of war," said Christy, to the increased disgust of his companion.

"What do you suppose they will do with us?" asked Beeks, looking as though he had not a friend in the world, though he had always been a very

brave and active fellow when there was anything to do.

"I don't know, but I suppose she will run the blockade into the Cape Fear River, and we may be taken up to Wilmington."

While they were talking about it, they saw a group of officers coming to the forward deck, where they had remained since they came on board. They appeared to be examining the steamer to ascertain what damage she had sustained. Her bulwarks had been torn off, and she had suffered not a little from shot; but she did not appear to be very seriously damaged. At the head of the party was one who had a uniform, and dignity enough to be the commander of the ship.

"Who are those two men forward?" asked this gentleman, as he called the attention of the others to the two strangers.

No one knew who they were, and the captain continued to advance, looking very sharply at Christy, or at his uniform. The lieutenant thought he had seen the gentleman before, for it was quite impossible entirely to forget one with so much character in his face.

"I am afraid I shall be obliged to call upon

you, sir, to explain how you and your companion happen to be here, for I was not before aware of your presence."

"I shall cheerfully explain, Captain Carboneer," replied Christy, recognizing the captain, and bowing politely.

"Ah, you know me? But I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, so far as I can remember," added the captain.

"We met under some disadvantages so far as you are concerned, for I had the satisfaction of seeing you, though you did not see me," replied the lieutenant, looking very good-natured in spite of his situation as a prospective prisoner.

"I must beg you to explain still further, Mr. — I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Passford, sir, Christopher Passford, midshipman in the United States Navy, and at present third lieutenant of the steamer Bellevite, which you can hardly make out at this moment, though I remember that you have seen her before," answered Christy, telling the whole story, as indeed his uniform had already done, so far as his rank was concerned.

"I am very happy to meet you under present

circumstances, Mr. Passford, though I am not yet informed where I met you before."

"Perhaps you did not exactly meet me, Captain Carboneer; but, at any rate, we were in the same boat together."

"I suppose we met, if at all, on the Hudson, in connection with the Bellevite. Your people have not been as fortunate to-day with their gunnery practice as on that occasion," suggested the captain.

"Now, Captain Carboneer, will you kindly inform me in regard to the status of this vessel? Is she a naval vessel, or simply a blockade runner?"

"She is both; and I am sorry for your sake to inform you that you are a prisoner of war."

"I supposed I was."

"Perhaps you will be willing to inform me what became of Major Pierson and Corny Passford — the latter a cousin of yours, I believe?"

"Like myself, the major is a prisoner of war. Corny was injured in the disaster to the Vampire, as you are aware; he is also a prisoner, but on parole, remaining at my father's house to be healed."

"I have to regret to-day more than ever before

that we failed to capture the Bellevite, for I find that she is even faster than the Yazoo," added the captain.

"The Yazoo?"

"Formerly the Killbright, but now the Yazoo."

At this moment an officer came up and spoke to Captain Carboneer. As both of them looked aft, Christy did the same, and, after studying the speck he saw on the ocean, he was satisfied that it was the Bellevite, coming down upon the Yazoo with all her speed.

CHAPTER XVII

A SATISFACTORY ORDER

WHATEVER had happened to the Bellevite, it was plain enough now to Christy that she had repaired the injury, for the speck in the distance was assuming the form of a steamer. The discovery was not calculated to fan the hopes of Captain Carboneer and his officers, though the two Unionists on board of the Yazoo were elated. The chase was continued till the middle of the afternoon, when the Bellevite opened fire with her heavy midship gun.

"Mr. Passford, your ship has opened fire upon us, and I will not compel you to expose yourself to it," said Captain Carboneer, as one of the shots from the Bellevite dropped into the water near the Yazoo. "You are at liberty to retire to any part of the vessel you desire, with your companion."

"Thank you, sir; you are very kind; and as I don't care to be shot by my friends, I will go below," replied Christy.

It was hardly safer below than on deck, and it was not likely that the resolute commander of the Yazoo would allow her to be captured as long as he could make any resistance. Christy got the idea from the decision he had observed in the face and expression of Captain Carboneer, that the only way to capture the steamer would be to knock her to pieces. He expected to be saved from the fate of a prisoner of war, but he was not ready to believe that the Yazoo would be sent to the North as a prize. She had not half the force of the Bellevite, either in men or guns, and it had been proved that her speed could not save her. But all the chances of accidents were to be incurred, and no one could predict the final result.

Christy and Beeks went below, and seated themselves in the wardroom of the ship. It looked as though it had been altered from the dining-saloon of a passenger steamer for its present use. But the vessel was an elegant affair, and Christy thought it was evident from what he saw that she had been built for a steam-yacht by some British magnate. She was not more than two-thirds as large as the Bellevite.

The sound of the firing indicated that the Belle-

vite was gaining on the chase even more rapidly than in the morning. At the end of a couple of hours more she seemed to be within a mile, or perhaps less. The Yazoo was shaking in every fibre of her steel body, and it was plain that Captain Carboneer was straining her to the utmost to effect his escape.

"It is beginning to warm up a little," said Beeks, as he tried to look out at one of the round ports of the wardroom.

"It will be hotter than this before we see the end of it," replied Christy. "Can you see anything?"

"Not a thing; of course the Bellevite is astern of us," added Beeks. "But the Yazoo is not using her guns."

"How can she? She has not fired a shot for some time, and she cannot without coming to. I should say she might as well do one thing as another. She can't run away from the Bellevite, and she may as well take her chances in a fight as a run."

"But the Bellevite does not seem to be handling her great gun at a very lively rate," suggested Beeks.

"I suppose Captain Breaker wants to save all he can of the Yazoo, and he knows that he can knock her all to pieces when he decides that it is necessary."

"What is all that racket on deck?" asked Beeks.

"Probably they are getting a couple of stern chasers ready for use," answered Christy; and this explanation was soon proved to be correct by the report of a gun at the stern of the Yazoo.

For the next half-hour, the firing from the Bellevite was more rapid, and several crashes, produced by the striking of shot, were heard. It was soon apparent that one of the stern chasers had been disabled; and after a while the other ceased its noise. Beeks was so excited that he left the wardroom, and found his way into what proved to be the captain's cabin. More than one shot had come into it, and made no little havoc. He found a port there through which he obtained a view of the Bellevite. Whatever damage had been done to her, her engine was in perfect order, for she was driving ahead at her best speed.

The quartermaster reported what he had seen to Christy, though it proved nothing except that the

Bellevite was all right, but everything began to look more hopeful to the occupants of the ward-room. They had only to wait, for they could do nothing. The pursuer had ceased to discharge her guns, and those of the Yazoo were useless under present circumstances.

The situation was becoming more exciting on the deck of the Yazoo, judging by the sounds that came from it. Then it was evident that the Bellevite had returned to her former tactics, and was coming alongside with the intention of boarding. Loud yells and fierce cries followed, and then came the noise of a hand-to-hand struggle on the deck. It was of short duration, for the ship's company of the Yazoo were outnumbered at least two to one.

"I suppose we may go on deck now," said Beeks.

"I should judge that the fight was over," replied Christy, as he led the way out of the wardroom.

At the companion-way they found two sailors assisting Captain Carboneer to his cabin. His face was covered with blood, and he looked very pale. The surgeon was close by him. Christy felt sincerely sorry for the commander, for he was a noble and upright man. His protest had pre-

vented Major Pierson from attempting to carry out whatever plan he had in his mind for the abduction of Florry Passford, and the young officer felt grateful to him.

"Ah, Mr. Passford, the luck is on your side again," said the wounded commander, when he saw Christy.

"Of course, I rejoice that it is so, but I am sincerely sorry that you are wounded," replied Christy. "I must thank you for your interference in behalf of my sister in opposition to the scheme of Major Pierson."

"How could you know anything about that?" asked the commander, bracing himself up.

"I heard the whole of it."

"I see; but I did not consider that Major Pierson contemplated any ruffianism," added Captain Carboneer, as the surgeon urged him to go into his cabin.

Christy hastened on deck, and was warmly received by his fellow-officers there. He reported on board to Captain Breaker without any delay, and was warmly congratulated on his escape. He returned to his duty at once. Paul Vapoor was inclined to hug him when he met him.

"I felt like a prisoner of war," said Christy, when he had told his brief story. "The Bellevite was disabled, and I supposed it was all up with me."

"A shot from the Killbright damaged our rudder, so that we could not steer her; though we repaired the mischief after a considerable delay," replied the engineer. "But we have the prize."

"She was intended for a cruiser, and they call her the Yazoo."

"Whatever her name, she will not be a cruiser on that side."

The captured vessel was carefully surveyed; she had been considerably damaged in the contest, but she was still seaworthy, and Mr. Blowitt was appointed prize-master to take her to New York. All the arrangements were speedily completed, and, when the prize had sailed for her destination, Christy became the acting second lieutenant.

For the next month the Bellevite cruised in search of such craft as the Killbright, and then she took her place on the blockade off Mobile Bay, to which she had been ordered. Mr. Blowitt and the prize-crew had returned, and all the damage done by the guns of the Yazoo had been repaired, so

that the Bellevite was in as good condition as when she left the Navy Yard at Brooklyn. She captured several schooners, but no very important prize. Many of the officers were disgusted with the inactivity of the service.

In a letter from his father, Christy obtained the information that the Bellevite was likely to be ordered to duty as a cruiser, for which her great speed adapted her better than any other vessel in the navy. This was cheering news to the discontented ones. But before any orders to this effect was received, the ship was ordered to proceed to Pensacola, where a very fast steamer was said to be awaiting an opportunity to get to sea.

The position of the steamer was ascertained with no little difficulty; but it was protected by the guns of the forts. Captain Breaker desired to obtain better information in regard to the Teaser, as the negroes said she was called. She was quite small, and carried only a single long gun, and it was suspected that she was a privateer. On the evening of the Bellevite's arrival, the weather was rainy, foggy, and thick. It was just the night for a blockade runner, and the captain believed that an attempt would be made to get out at this time.

The Unionists held Fort Pickens, and the Confederates the forts on the mainland. The negroes said the Teaser was anchored at the mouth of the lagoon, or very near it. This was not very definite, even if it were accepted as true. It was very important that the Teaser should not be permitted to get out of the bay, for she might do a great deal of mischief to the shipping of the nation.

"I don't believe the stories of the negroes," said Captain Breaker, as he was discussing the situation with his officers. "I know the port very well, and I have no idea where the mouth of the lagoon is, or even if it has any mouth in Pensacola Bay."

"Wherever the Teaser may be waiting her chance, this is a good night for a start," replied Mr. Dashington.

"Of course the officers of Fort Pickens are on the lookout for the saucy little craft," added Mr. Blowitt.

"Captain Westover is still on board, and you are to send him to the fort, are you not, Captain Breaker?" asked Christy.

"Yes; as soon as he is ready to go," replied the captain. "He has given all the information he has in regard to the Teaser; but he has not seen

her to-day, and he does not believe she is in the lower bay, but that she is somewhere in the vicinity of the Navy Yard."

"If you will excuse me, Captain Breaker, I don't believe she means to come out by the main channel, for her people know that the eyes of the officers of Fort Pickens are wide open," suggested Christy, with a good deal of diffidence.

"How do you think she will come out, Mr. Passford?" asked the captain, with a smile.

"By Santa Rosa Sound, sir," replied the third lieutenant.

"Possibly you are right, Mr. Passford, though I do not think you are," added the commander, thoughtfully. "Santa Rosa Sound is about forty miles long, and there is hardly water enough in it, up and down, to float a raft, to say nothing of a steamer."

But later in the day, the captain called Christy aside, and had a long talk with him, the charts open before them. It certainly did not look like a very hopeful enterprise to take a steamer through such a sound as that described.

"But we have no correct information in regard to the anchorage of the Teaser, and I have decided

to obtain it if possible. I propose to send you to look into the matter, Mr. Passford," added the captain, settling the question in that way. "Select your own boat and crew. But if the Teaser gets by Fort Pickens, we may have to chase her to sea, and if on your return you do not find the Bellevite, you and your men will remain at Fort Pickens."

Christy was entirely satisfied with this order.

CHAPTER XVIII

LIEUTENANT PASSFORD IN COMMAND

CHRISTY felt as much honored by the confidence reposed in him by the captain as though he had been appointed to the command of a steamer. But he had more than once proved that he could be safely trusted, and demonstrated that he had judgment, discretion, and skill beyond his years. He was not only brave and resolute, but he was faithful and patriotic.

He went about among the ship's company and selected the men he desired to assist him in his enterprise, and requested those chosen to say nothing about the matter, for the lieutenant was aware that he should have more volunteers than he could accommodate in the largest of the boats. All would want to go, and the young officer would be teased and coaxed, and all sorts of influence brought to bear upon him to permit this and that one to be of

the party. It was easier to be silent than it was to reply to all the applications.

Christy selected a large whaleboat for the service in which he was to be employed, and he had his own reasons for the choice he made. He had received unlimited authority to adopt his own measures. The only point that was strongly impressed upon his mind by the captain was that the Teaser must be captured.

After supper the order was given to the third lieutenant to convey Captain Westover back to the fort, or to land him at the usual place near it. Nothing was thought of the order, though perhaps some of the officers considered a dozen seamen, all armed with cutlasses and revolvers, a large boat's crew for such a service. It was very thick weather, and Captain Westover begged Christy not to land him within the enemy's lines, which he promised not to do.

The men gave way, and the boat went off into the gloom of the evening. Beeks gave his whole attention to the course of the boat, and Lieutenant Passford was engaged in a very earnest conversation with the military passenger. The landing-place seemed to be reached too soon, for Christy

had not finished his business. He landed with him, and together they went to the fort, where the young officer had a conversation with the commander of the force there.

"I hope you will not get into hot water, Mr. Passford," said Captain Westover, as he came to the sallyport with him.

"I cannot say that I shall not," replied Christy, "but I shall do the best I can to report on board of the ship with the force intrusted to me; and I hope I shall have the Teaser with me."

"I hope you will. There are several small steamers up in the bay; but I have not the least idea where you will have to look for the Teaser, for we at the fort have not seen any such steamer lately."

"There can be no doubt of her existence, Captain Westover, for the Bellevite was sent here to look out for her, as her speed is said to be remarkable. But, good-night, captain."

"Good-night, lieutenant; success to you, and a safe return," added the captain.

"Thank you," answered Christy, as he hurried down to the landing-place.

Among those whom the lieutenant had selected

was a master's mate by the name of Flint, who had assisted on board of the Bellevite in the affair with the Vampire. He was a modest, quiet man, who made no especial figure among his shipmates, though he had strongly attracted the attention of his officer. Next to Christy he was the highest in rank, and the second in command. Beeks was the next man selected, and he had done all that was necessary in the preparation of the boat, including putting into it slyly a supply of provisions, and a number of articles which the lieutenant had designated.

On his return to the boat, Christy found his crew in excellent order, for he had instructed Flint to allow no noise or disorder, as sailors and young men generally are somewhat given to sky-larking when not under the eye of a commissioned officer. Christy took his place with Flint in the stern sheets of the boat, and ordered Beeks, who was acting as coxswain, to shove off and give way.

"I have no instructions yet, sir," replied Beeks, as he obeyed the order, and headed the boat away from the shore.

"We have to make two miles east by south, and that course will carry us parallel with the shore of

Santa Rosa Island, variation included," replied Christy, who had been a diligent student of the chart, and had written down all that it was important for him to remember, though he had one of his own charts, or a piece of one, in the boat.

"East by south, sir," replied Beeks, as he put the whaleboat on the required course.

Thus far, Christy had kept his own counsel, and not whispered a word of his intentions even to the master's mate. He had no motive for such heroic concealment of his plan, but he had not had the time to discuss it with any person. Besides, though he had decided upon his course in the beginning, he was too much in the dark himself to lay down a definite plan; and his course must depend largely upon the information he obtained from time to time.

He had examined the charts and the Coast Pilot very carefully; and the facts he had obtained from the latter rather staggered him in regard to the idea he had advanced that the Teaser might go out through Santa Rosa Sound. It was not navigable for vessels with a draught of over four feet, and it would have to be a very small man-of-war that could float in that depth. Though it was now

the time of the spring tides, they did not add more than six inches to the height of the mean tide, which was but a couple of inches over two feet.

Even before he took his place in the boat alongside the ship, he had come to the conclusion that the Teaser, if she proved to be anything more than a toy boat, could not go to sea through the sound, and she was not likely to attempt it. He had said as much as this to Captain Breaker, who reminded him that he was to ascertain if possible what the craft intended to do, if he succeeded in finding her.

Flint did not manifest any desire to know more than the law allowed, and he asked no questions in regard to the enterprise in which he was engaged. In fact, one reason why he was chosen was because he had an excellent habit of minding his own business. Possibly Christy was more particular on this point than an older officer would have been.

"I think we have made two miles, Mr. Passford," said Beeks, when the men had pulled about an hour. "Of course, I cannot be sure of the distance run, for I can only guess at it."

"Run up to the shore, then, and let us see how far off we are," added Christy.

In a few minutes the bottom of the boat struck on the sand, and it was forced up far enough to permit the lieutenant to go on shore. Like most of the islands in this part of the gulf, Santa Rosa was nothing but sand, which in the eastern end is of a peculiar reddish hue. It is little more than a sand spit for its whole length, though in some places the wind has piled up mounds, or dunes.

"Come with me, if you please, Flint," said Christy, as he leaped to the shore.

Flint followed him, as usual asking no questions, and, if he had any curiosity in regard to the purposes of his leader, he did not manifest it. The lieutenant glanced at the trend of the shore, and then walked at right angles with it. No part of the island was inhabited, or even occupied, except Fort Pickens and a Union camp. It was a dismal place, especially in the fog and darkness.

A short walk brought the explorers to the waters of Pensacola Bay. It was in vain that they tried to penetrate the gloom and the mist, and nothing could be seen. Flint expressed himself to this effect.

"I did not expect to see anything," replied Christy. "I only came across here to find how wide the island was at this point. I am satisfied that we are about where I supposed we were. Half a mile to the westward of us the island is more than double the breadth it is here."

"I see, sir; if you had found it much wider than it is, you would have known that you had not gone far enough in the boat," replied Flint.

"Precisely so; I wanted to find where we were before I changed the course in going farther to the eastward," added Christy.

Flint made no further remark, and they returned to the boat, and seated themselves in their places. The lieutenant gave the order to shove off.

"We are in no hurry, Beeks; if the men are tired, you can stop longer to rest them," continued the commander of the expedition.

The men scouted the idea of being tired after a pull of two miles in a comparatively smooth sea. Christy told them that they might have some very heavy work to do before they returned to the ship, and he did not wish to use up their strength unnecessarily.

"Now, keep her east by north for a couple of

miles, Beeks," continued Christy. "That will be as far as we have occasion to go in this direction. Don't hurry them; take it easy, for it will not be high tide till half-past twelve, and we may have more time than we shall know how to use."

The crew pulled very leisurely, and it was over an hour before Beeks estimated that they had made the two miles. As before, Christy and Flint were landed, and they walked across the island. But their walk was not even half the length of the last one; and the spit was so narrow at this place that the lieutenant was confident he had struck the point he intended.

"This is our base of operations," said Christy, as he stood on the shore of the bay. "We have got along very well so far, for it is not time yet for the music to begin, if it is to begin at all. What are you about, Flint?"

The master's mate had lain down on the sand at the water's edge, and his companion was very much puzzled by his attitude. He wondered if his companion had the stomach-ache, and was not able to stand up.

"I beg your pardon, Lieutenant Passford, but if you will kindly be quiet for a moment, I hope to

be able to answer your question," replied Flint, in a low tone.

Christy complied with the request, and as he did so, he thought he heard a noise in the distance, though he was not sure of it. He listened with all his ears, and some confused sounds came to him; but he could make nothing of them.

"I heard some sort of a noise," said Flint, rising from his recumbent position. "But I can make nothing of what I hear. If there was a fresh breeze, I should say that it was the surf."

"I heard it, too; but I am bothered to make out what it is. Did you get an idea of any kind?" asked Christy.

"It sounded as though something of a gang of men were at work off in this direction," replied Flint, pointing east of north. "I am almost sure I heard the blows of hammers, or something like them."

"The noise I heard might have been almost anything," added Christy.

"What is there off in that direction?" asked Flint, pointing again.

"About north of us is Town Point, and just beyond it is Old Navy Cove," said the lieutenant,

who had been up the bay in the Bellevite on an excursion, and who had studied up all the localities.

"Possibly they are repairing a vessel there," suggested Flint.

"They would not do that over there, and certainly not on a dark night," argued Christy. "But we will soon find out all about it."

He led the way back to the boat, which he had ordered Beeks to have carried on the shore. Then they proceeded to bear it across the island to the bay, where it was put into the water again.

CHAPTER XIX

SOME TROUBLE ON BOARD THE TEASER

It was not a difficult thing for so many men to carry the whaleboat across the island, and they were disposed to make merry over the novelty of the task; but they had been instructed not to speak a loud word after the party left the south side of the island. The noise to which Christy and Flint had listened indicated that something was going on, though they could not decide what it was. In the stillness of the night, and in the absence of any roar of breakers, sounds could be heard a long distance, though whether they came one mile or two, they could not determine.

"Get out those cloths, Beeks," said Christy, as soon as the boat had been put into the water. "Every oar must be very carefully muffled, and you will see that it is properly done."

"I will have it done in a few minutes, sir," replied the acting coxswain.

"As I said before, we are in no hurry, and you may take your time to do it properly," added the lieutenant.

"Those sounds are still to be heard," said Flint, who had been a short distance from the boat to listen for them.

"I hear them," replied Christy, walking away from the boat to continue the investigation while they were waiting. "Some kind of a job is in progress at no great distance from us. From how far off do you calculate that those sounds come?"

"I think they must come a mile; and I don't believe I can guess any nearer to it than that, though it is possible they come two miles. I know little or nothing of the region about here. Suppose we should go a mile north-northeast from this spot, what should we find there, Mr. Passford?" asked Flint, apparently greatly interested in the question.

"It would be a point on Pensacola Bay, about half-way between this island, where we stand, and Town Point," replied Christy. "I should say it would be in the channel leading into Santa Rosa Sound."

"Precisely so!" exclaimed Flint, in an energetic

whisper. "That's the way they are going to take the Teaser out, and they are doing something over there to prepare her for the trip in shallow water."

The master's mate was not aware that Christy had suggested to the captain this way of escape for the Teaser, and he had abandoned the idea himself. Flint had reached his conclusion from his own premises. They discussed the matter for some time, though it was impossible to arrive at any conclusion for the want of data on which to base their reasoning.

"All ready, sir," reported Beeks, coming up to them at this moment.

"How far is the entrance to the sound from Fort Pickens, Mr. Passford?" asked Flint.

"About four miles."

"Then why should they choose such a night as this for their work?"

"The Bellevite, floating in four fathoms of water on the other side of the island, could shell them out if they were seen, as they certainly would be from Fort Pickens," replied Christy.

"That makes it plain enough," added Flint, as they walked towards the boat.

"But I am not quite willing to believe yet that

the Teaser will go out through the sound. If she could get through at all, it would only be after getting aground no end of times, and if to-morrow should be a clear day, she could be seen anywhere on her course," persisted Christy. "She cannot expect to make eight or ten knots an hour in that shallow water."

The lieutenant ordered the men into the boat, after she was shoved off the beach. They worked with such care that not a sound came from her. The oars were shipped, and the sailors began to row. As instructed, they pulled very slowly, though such work could not be done in perfect silence.

"Look out for that binnacle, Beeks," said Christy. "The light from it may betray us."

"You have not given me the course, sir," replied the coxswain, as he obeyed the order.

"North-northeast," added Christy, as he settled back in the stern sheets.

No one was allowed to speak in the boat, and the lieutenant set the example of silence. But he kept his ears wide open, though the little noise made by the oars and the rippling of the water prevented him from hearing anything at first. It

was so dark that one could hardly see another in the boat. It was in vain that Christy watched in the gloom for the glow of a light; for all was nearly total darkness in every direction.

In about half an hour they began to hear the sounds which had attracted their attention on the island, and they proceeded from directly ahead, indicating that the operations, whatever they were, came from the entrance to the sound. The workmen were not likely to hear the approach of the boat while they were making so much noise themselves. In addition to the sounds they had heard before, they recognized the noise of escaping steam.

This last discovery made it certain that a steamer was there, though the listeners could not know whether it was the Teaser or not. Both of the officers of the expedition, in the uselessness of their eyes, made the best use they could of their ears. Christy listened to ascertain if there was more than one steamer present. In a whisper he asked Flint to consider this question. There was no doubling of the sounds to indicate more than one steamer.

For ten minutes more Christy listened and was silent; but he was doing some very heavy think-

ing, for by this time the boat was very near the scene of operations, if it could be a scene in that dense darkness. Every sound, even to the speech of the men, could be distinctly heard. Still nothing could be seen, and Christy knew that there was a point of nearness where something could be discerned even in any gloom of night. He permitted the boat to continue on its course, till he could very dimly make out an object ahead.

"Way enough," he whispered to Beeks.

The coxswain raised both hands, and made a gesture with them, which was the signal for the men to cease rowing. The sounds were now more tangible. Occasionally there were a few raps with a hammer, but the most of them were the orders of the person in charge.

"I don't believe there are more than a dozen men there," whispered Flint.

"More than that, I should say; but even if there are two dozen, it is all the same. Take off the mufflers from the oars, Beeks," continued Christy. "Then give way with a will, and run for whatever may come in sight."

Beeks obeyed the order, and in a couple of minutes the boat was driving into the gloom at her

ordinary speed. Something came into view a moment later, and it was a small steamer.

"Boat, ahoy!" shouted some one from the steamer.

"On board of the steamer!" replied Christy.

"Are you the pilot?" demanded the speaker from the vessel.

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the lieutenant.

"I shall not want you now," continued the man on the steamer.

"How is that?" demanded Christy, as though this was an entirely unexpected reply.

"I have concluded to make my way out through the sound, Gilder."

"Then my name is Gilder," added Christy, in a low tone.

"I have a plan of my own, and I reckon I shall make it go," proceeded the captain of the steamer. "The Teaser don't draw much water, and I know how to help her over the shoal places."

"When do you expect to get through the sound?" asked Christy.

"I don't know when; but I shall get through."

"But you will find a blockader at the east end of the island; and then you will be as badly off as you are now," argued Christy.

"I don't believe there is any blockader there. Who are all those men in the boat with you, Gilder?"

"They belong to the water guard," replied Christy, at a venture, and he thought that would describe them as well as any terms at his command. "They expected you to go out by the main channel to-night."

"No lie in that," chuckled Flint.

"I wish they would come on board of the Teaser and help me out, for my men won't work."

"How many men have you?" asked the lieutenant.

"Just fifteen; the rest of my crew were to come on board at midnight, half an hour before high tide. But the men I have with me won't work, and I shall not be ready for them, I am afraid."

"What is the reason they won't work?"

"They say they shipped to fight the Yankees, and they are not going to do such work as lighting up the steamer."

"Perhaps we can bring them to their senses," said Christy, as he ordered Beeks to give way again.

A few strokes of the oars enabled the officers in

the stern sheets to obtain a full view of the Teaser, and she looked like a trim little steamer of about two hundred tons. She was rather long, and she had a very sharp bow. The reports gave her the reputation of being a very fast sailer.

"Let every man have his arms in order," said Christy impressively, in a low tone. "Give way with a will, and when you unship your oars have your weapons ready, though I hardly think you will have to use them at present."

As the boat dashed towards the little steamer, the sounds of an altercation came over the water. The angry voice of the captain, if the late speaker was the captain, and several others were heard in a dispute; and as the boat came alongside the report of a pistol indicated that the belligerents were in earnest.

Christy sprang upon the deck of the Teaser, with his revolver in his hand. Half a dozen men stood in a group by the side of the engine-room, confronting the man who had done the talking with the boat, as Christy knew by the sound of his voice.

"We are not held by any papers we signed!" protested one of the men forward. "We are will-

ing to do our duty, Captain Folkner, but we did not ship to burrow through the sand, and run the risk of being captured by the Yankees. We shipped to run the blockade, and that risk is in the papers."

"I shall take my vessel out as I think best, Lonley; and my men are not to dictate to me what I am to do," replied Captain Folkner angrily.

"I am willing to leave it to Captain Gilder. You know as well as I do that the rest of the ship's company would not come on board till the Teaser was outside of Santa Rosa Island. We appeal to you, Captain Gilder," said Lonley.

"Why do you object to going out through Santa Rosa Sound?" asked Christy, willing to do the fair thing, since the mutineers had appealed to him.

"The Teaser draws ten feet of water with her coal in, and she cannot get through the sound in a week, if ever."

"Are you willing to go to sea by running the blockade, Lonley?"

"Perfectly willing; and so are the whole ship's company."

"But I won't take the risk of running the blockade. They put a fast steamer on there to-day, and it is useless," replied Captain Folkner.

The situation was certainly interesting to Christy and his companions.

CHAPTER XX

COMING TO THE POINT

Captain Folkner of the Teaser was evidently somewhat timid, and he had heard of the arrival of the Bellevite. Just now the large ships-of-war which had been there were absent on their duty, though they were expected to return at any time. There was liable to be some unpleasantness at any time between Fort Pickens and Fort Barrancas; but everything was quiet just now.

Flint had come on board of the Teaser with Christy, but none of the boat's crew had attended them. The situation was very novel to the lieutenant, and he did not feel competent to arbitrate between the contending parties. Besides, he was not willing to believe that he could be entirely impartial, for he had a personal and patriotic interest in the issue of the quarrel.

The seamen, under the leadership of Lonley, who appeared to be an officer, were the more pow-

erful party, and the more to be dreaded. He was disposed to decide against them, if he could get them out of the way by doing so. They were willing to leave the matter to him, and he began at last to see his way through it.

"The captain of a ship is the authority to be respected, Lonley," said he, when he had made up his mind what to do.

"We might as well bury ourselves in the sands as try to go through there," replied the leader of the mutiny, who seemed to be a very intelligent man, and Christy concluded from his language and manner that he was not a common sailor.

"That may be; but the captain is supreme on the deck of his own ship," argued Christy.

"We are not on the high seas, and the Teaser has not yet gone into commission. It was only this afternoon in Pensacola that Captain Folkner told his ship's company that he was going to burrow through the sand in Santa Rosa Sound. We all said we would not go with him; but a dozen of us came down with him when he told us that he had a way to float the steamer through, and he was sure it would work. We did not understand that we were to become mud-diggers. When we got

here, we were satisfied that his plan amounted to nothing, and would not work."

"I am satisfied that it will work," interposed Captain Folkner.

"The agreement in the articles was to run the blockade. If we got through the sound, it would take a week of constant drudgery, which we did not ship to do."

"Are you ready to do duty on board of the Teaser when she is in deep water, Lonley?" asked Christy.

"Every one of us; and every one of the party on shore!" protested the leader.

"Will that satisfy you, Captain Folkner?" continued Christy, appealing to him.

"It would if I had the steamer in deep water," replied the captain. "But how am I to get her into deep water if my crew will not work?"

"Run the blockade, according to the articles!" exclaimed Lonley.

"When are the rest of the ship's company to join you?" asked Christy of the leader of the mutineers.

"They are coming down in boats at midnight or later; and we shall join them then and wait till the ship is ready to take us on board. They will

come across from Pensacola to Navy Cove, and then walk till they come to the Teaser."

"All right," said the lieutenant. "I will land you at Navy Cove, and you can wait there till the rest of the crew come."

"I am perfectly satisfied with that arrangement," replied Lonley.

"But I am not," interposed the captain, angrily. "What can I do without any crew to help get the steamer through the sound?"

"I have men enough to take care of you and the Teaser, Captain Folkner; and the men in the boat will do everything that is required to be done on board of the Teaser."

"That's another thing," replied the captain, appeased by the implied promise.

"I can hardly blame your men because they are not willing to go through the sound with a steamer drawing ten feet of water when there is not more than six feet of water to float her," said Christy. "Besides, if you do not get to the other end of the sound before morning, you will be seen by some of the blockaders, and they could blow this steamer to pieces, and kill half your people in a few minutes."

"It may be dangerous, but so is running the blockade," added the captain.

"Going out in a dark night and spending a week in sight of the blockaders are two different things. But we need not discuss the matter any more. I will put your men on the point yonder, and then I will return and help you out of your present difficulty. Am I to take off the men in the engine department?" asked Christy, as he went to the side where the boat was.

"No; the engineers and firemen are all right, for they were not called upon to do any work out of the vessel."

Christy and Flint stepped into the boat, and the crew followed them. There were twelve of them, and the lieutenant thought they were all good seamen. He did not like to have them reserved for use in the Confederate Navy; but he could not help himself then, and he soon landed the party on the point. The situation had been explained to the crew of the boat, and they had avoided saying anything to commit themselves.

Though it involved a risk to do it, Christy had dressed in an ordinary suit of clothes for the occasion, and the party wore nothing by which they

could be identified as sailors of the navy. As soon as the boat had landed its passengers, it returned to the Teaser at the best speed the crew could produce.

"I had no idea that you had a plan like this in your head, Mr. Passford," said Flint, as soon as the boat was clear of Town Point.

"I did not know it myself, Flint. It has all grown out of the circumstances as we found them," replied Christy. "But I did intend, if I found the Teaser without a fighting crew on board of her, to capture her if the situation warranted such a step."

"But you came prepared for just this thing," suggested Flint.

"I came prepared for anything. I hoped we might be able to capture the Teaser, but I did not expect it."

"I suppose you expect to do it now."

"Yes, I do; and I ought to be broken if I don't do it. I am sorry to let all those men enter the rebel navy; and that is all that vexes me at the present moment."

"Perhaps they can be picked up to-morrow, or later to-night," suggested Flint. "From what I

heard, I think she was to have a fighting crew of about forty men. Of course they will try to join the steamer to-night or to-morrow; and why not let them do it?" chuckled Flint.

"We will attend to this affair first, but I like the idea."

They reached the Teaser in due time, and all hands went on board of her. Captain Folkner, with a couple of men he had contrived to retain, with two firemen, was at work on his apparatus to float a vessel drawing ten feet in six feet of water or less. Alongside he had a hundred or more of empty barrels which he was sinking under the sides by hauling them down with a line under the bottom of the vessel. He did the work partly with his windlass worked by steam, and he had lifted the bow of the Teaser at least three feet out of water.

Captain Folkner expatiated with enthusiasm on his plan, and explained the details to the lieutenant. Christy saw that he had considerable mechanical genius, but he certainly lacked a balance-wheel. The officer had set him down as a timid man, but this conversation assured him that the captain was a brave man. He was carried away with his idea,

though it was plain that he had not examined the question in all its bearings.

"When I have lifted the steamer four feet, she can go through the sound, for I have taken a boat through that drew six feet. With your men to help me, I shall get the casks down by midnight, and then all we have to do is to go ahead," continued the enthusiast.

"Precisely so; and the Teaser is a screw steamer," added Christy.

"Of course she is; you have known her for two months, Gilder."

"When she has been lifted up four feet, she is to go ahead," repeated Christy, in the tone of a musing man.

"That is what I said; she is to go ahead."

"But what is to drive her ahead? Is she expected to go of herself?"

"Go of herself? Of course not. She is to be driven ahead by her engine as she always is," replied Captain Folkner, suspending the work upon which he was engaged, and trying to see the face of the pilot through the darkness. "How do steamers generally go ahead?"

"If they are screw steamers, they are propelled

by the pressure of the blades of the screw," answered Christy.

"And that is just the way the Teaser will be propelled through the sound," replied Captain Folkner. "This steamer is to be a privateer, and I own her. She has cost me about all the money I have in the world, and I don't want to lose her before I get to sea. If I can get into blue water with her, I am not at all concerned but that she will run away from anything afloat."

"How many knots can she do in a smooth sea?"

"Eighteen, and perhaps more."

"Then she is not fast enough for that blockader outside. I saw her at Mobile when she was a big steam-yacht, and they said she had done twenty-two knots more than once."

"I don't believe a word of it; and I am willing to take my chances to run away from her in the Teaser, if I can get out."

"If she is good for eighteen knots, it will not take her more than about two hours to run through the sound," added Christy, very much amused at the talk of the captain and owner.

"I don't expect her to go at full speed in that shallow water," said the enthusiast.

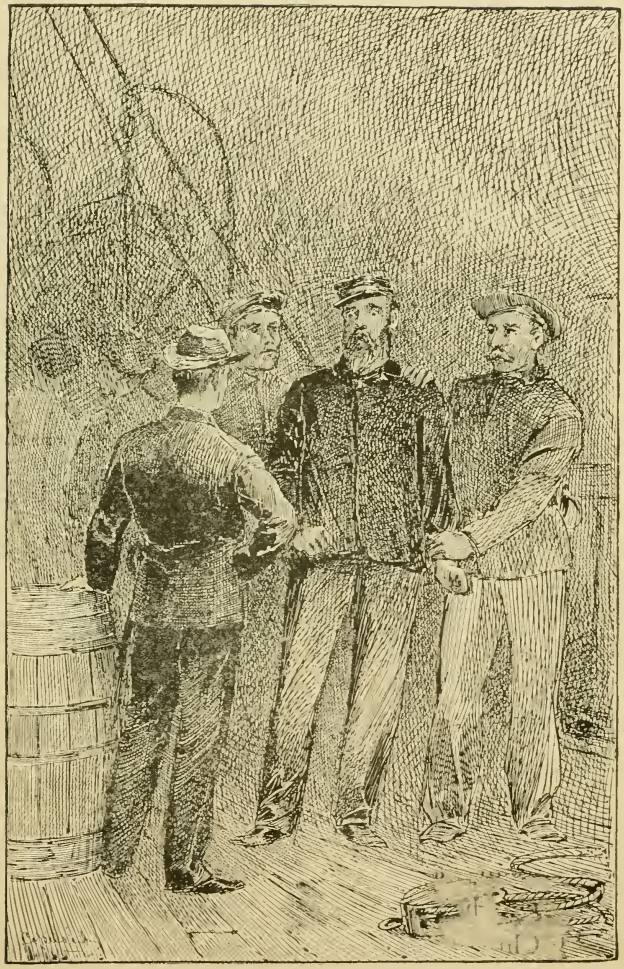
"Do you expect her to go at all when she is hoisted four feet out of water?" asked Christy, hardly able to keep from laughing.

Captain Folkner was silent for a moment, during which Christy thought he must have obtained a new idea, for it looked as though he had not thought of the working of the screw after all his flotation schemes had been successful.

"I reckon the propeller will have hold enough on the water to make her go right along, Gilder. I don't reckon you need make any trouble about that," added the man of mechanical ability, rather sheepishly.

Christy had brought his boat's crew on deck, and directed Flint how to post them. He thought he had paid proper respect to the talent of the enthusiast in listening to his theory, and that it was about time to bring the adventure to an issue.

"I shall not make any trouble about the screw, Captain Folkner, for I don't think we shall have any difficulty about it. But I believe we had better not hoist it any higher out of water," added Christy. "I mean that I think we had better go out of the bay by the main channel."



"He placed one of his men on each side of the Captain."
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"That means to run the blockade?" said the captain.

"That's the idea."

"Gilder, I want you to understand that I command this steamer," continued Captain Folkner, angrily.

"Right, with a little correction: You did command her, and I command her now," replied Christy, as he placed one of his men on each side of the captain.

CHAPTER XXI

ON A DARK AND FOGGY NIGHT

"I RECKON I don't quite understand you, Gilder," said Captain Folkner, very nervously. "I thought I was still in command of the Teaser."

"I shall not blame you for thinking so; but you are utterly mistaken all the same," added Christy.

"Did you come here to take the command out of my hands? Is that the reason why you sent all my men to Town Point?" demanded the captain, getting an idea of the situation.

"If you had been a magician, you could not have come any nearer to the truth."

"Who are you? I thought you were Gilder."

"I am not Gilder, though I found it convenient to answer to that name. It is reported that the Teaser is a very fast steamer, and I wanted her."

"Do you mean to say that you are a pirate?" asked Captain Folkner, stepping back as if to em-

phasize his disgust at such a person. "I have told you that the Teaser is a privateer, and it seems that you want her more than I do; but I don't believe it."

"Privateers and pirates are about the same in this age of the world. I am neither a pirate nor a privateer. Permit me to introduce myself more precisely than I have thought it wise to do before. I am Lieutenant Passford, of the United States steamer Bellevite; and I take possession of the Teaser as a lawful prize. I think we need not discuss the matter any longer, especially as the tide is high enough by this time to run out of the bay. Disarm him."

"Say, what sort of a joke is this?" demanded the captain.

"If you are good-natured enough to regard it as a joke, I have not the least objection," replied Christy. "But I shall be under the painful necessity of confining you in your stateroom for the present, and I hope you will make yourself as happy as possible, Captain Folkner."

The lieutenant directed Flint to have the prisoner conveyed to his stateroom, and to have a man stationed at the door to see that he did not escape,

or do any mischief. The sentinel was to keep his eye on him all the time, and not allow the room to be closed for a moment. The most reliable man of the party was selected for this duty, for the captain, in a fit of desperation over the loss of his vessel, which was his fortune, might attempt some reckless act.

Accompanied by six men, Christy visited the engine-room, where nearly all the hands remaining on board were employed. If there was to be any trouble at all in completing the capture, it would be in this department. Everything was in working order, and an engineer was on duty, for the engine had been used in dragging the casks under the bottom of the vessel.

Beeks was directed to arrest the men on duty, and the engine was handed over to Sampson, who had been brought for such a position if the expedition needed him in that capacity. But there was only an assistant engineer and several firemen on duty, and these were disposed of without any delay. They were all conducted to the wardroom, where they were disarmed and a guard placed over them. A couple of sailors were detailed to serve as firemen, and the work of taking possession was completed.

For the first time the lieutenant had an opportunity to examine the prize, as she would be if he succeeded in getting her out of the bay. She was certainly a fine little steamer, and, with the heavy gun mounted on a pivot, she would have been capable of doing a great deal of mischief among the unprotected merchant ships of the nation.

When he visited the cabin, he found two colored men there, one of whom appeared to be a very intelligent fellow. He was very polite to the lieutenant, and it was evident that he had no personal interest in the success of the Teaser in the business for which she had been fitted out. He was the cabin steward, and he had heard everything that had been said in regard to the vessel since he came on board of her.

"What is your name, my man?" asked Christy, addressing the steward.

"My name is Davis Talbot; but no one ever calls me anything but Dave," replied the man, with a cheerful smile, as though he was not at all disconcerted by the change which had come about in the ownership of the Teaser.

"How long have you been on board of this

steamer, Dave?" asked the officer, much pleased with the intelligent face of the steward.

"About two months, sir."

"Where did this steamer come from?"

"Captain Folkner bought her somewhere in the West Indies, and brought her here before the blockade was fairly established."

"Then she is an English-built steamer?"

"I suppose she is, sir; but I don't know anything about it."

"Then she has been here a long while. What has Captain Folkner been doing all this time?" asked Christy curiously.

"Inventing, sir," replied Dave, chuckling.

"I see; he has that on the brain."

"The government threatened to take his vessel if he did not fit her out and take her to sea. Then he hurried up, and got a crew ready; but they had a quarrel last night, and most of the men would not come on board."

"Yes; I know all about that," added Christy, as he looked at his watch by the light of the shaded lamp in the cabin. "I suppose you insist upon serving the Confederacy, Dave?"

"I don't insist on anything, sir; I go where

the ship takes me, and I don't mean to quarrel with anybody."

"In other words, will it be necessary to put you under guard?" asked Christy.

"I don't think it would do me any good, sir," replied Dave, laughing.

"Which side do you belong on?" demanded the officer, rather impatiently.

"I belong on Dave's side, sir."

"Which is Dave's side?"

"The side of freedom," replied the steward, with some embarrassment. "I don't know you, sir; you don't wear the uniform of a Yankee or a rebel, and the darkey gets crushed between the upper and the nether millstone."

"Then to make the matter plainer to you, I am the third lieutenant of the United States steamer Bellevite, and I have captured this vessel as an officer of the United States Navy," replied Christy.

"That's all I want to know: the darkey knows where to go, when it is safe to go there," replied Dave.

"Then if it is safe for you to go to the pilot-house, you may come with me," added the lieutenant, as he led the way to the deck.

Beeks, with the men who had not been assigned to other duty, was cutting away the ropes that held the casks in place, and had already turned adrift all the raft of them alongside. All the rubbish the nautical inventor had collected to carry out his famous scheme of floating the vessel through the sound was cleared from the deck, and cut loose from the side.

"I think everything is clear, sir," reported Beeks, as Christy appeared on deck with Dave.

"Stand by to get up the anchor, then," added the lieutenant.

"No anchor down, sir," interposed Dave. "She is made fast to the buoy."

"So much the better. I suppose Captain Folkner did not trouble himself about the forts, Dave, did he?" Christy inquired.

"Yes, sir, he did; Captain Folkner never slept a wink when he did not have Fort Pickens on his stomach for a nightmare," replied Dave, with a chuckle.

"But Fort Pickens is all of four miles from the entrance to the channel of the sound."

"He was in mortal terror of the guns, all the same."

"How was it in regard to Fort Barrancas and Fort McRae?"

"Of course they would not fire on his vessel; if he went out in a fog or dark night, he was to burn a blue light; and I reckon you can do the same thing, though I don't believe it could be seen to-night from the forts," replied Dave, who appeared to be willing to make a good use of his knowledge.

"Then I don't think we shall have much trouble in getting out of the bay," added Christy, as he went to the pilot-house, attended by Dave.

Since the lieutenant had declared as unequivocally as he desired who and what he was, the steward did all he could to assist his new master. He had served Captain Folkner for two months, for he said the commander had lived on board all this time, and he had heard everything that passed between him and his officers and others with whom he had relations. He was about as well informed as though he had been an officer of the vessel in whom the captain confided all his affairs. He did not wait to have his knowledge dragged out of him, but he volunteered such information as he saw that the occasion required.

He was a mulatto, and had plenty of good blood in his veins, though it was corrupted with that of the hated race. He appeared to be about forty years of age, and his knowledge of the affairs of the locality could hardly have been better if he had been a white man, with a quick perception, a reasoning intellect, and a retentive memory. It was the rule with Union officers, soldiers, and sailors to trust the negroes, making proper allowance for their general ignorance and stupidity, and for particular circumstances. But some of them, even many of them, were brighter than might be expected from their situation and antecedents.

The binnacle from the whaleboat had been brought into the pilot-house, and Christy compared it with the compass in the Teaser's apparatus, after Dave had lighted it. There was no disagreement, and as the tide was still coming in, the head of the steamer was pointed to the westward, which would be her first course down the bay.

The lieutenant felt that everything depended upon the working of the steamer, and he was a total stranger to her peculiarities, if she had any, as most vessels have. Taking Beeks with him, he began at the stem and followed the rail entirely

around the steamer, feeling with a boat-hook along the sides. Sundry ropes, fenders, and pieces of lumber were dislodged, and everything put in order about the main deck. Then he visited the engine-room, and learned from Sampson that he had a full head of steam. This careful inspection completed, he ordered the quartermaster to cast off the fast at the buoy.

Taking his place in the pilot-house with Beeks, he rang the bell to go ahead. The Teaser started on quite a different voyage from what she had been intended for. Christy had studied up his courses and distances, and had imprinted the chart of the lower part of the bay on his brain. For the first part of the run, there was no obstacle, and no difficulty in regard to the course.

The fog and the darkness were so dense that not a thing could be seen in any direction; but he rang for full speed as soon as the Teaser was under way. A leadsman had been stationed on each side of the forecastle, though there was no present occasion for their services. Christy thought everything was going extremely well, and he was reasonably confident that he should succeed in his plan.

"Steamer, ahoy!" shouted a voice, coming out of the dense fog.

"That must be the patrol boat," said Dave, in a low tone.

Christy could not make any reply that would be satisfactory to the patrol, and he decided not to answer the hail. He had rather expected to be challenged in this way.

CHAPTER XXII

A VARIETY OF NIGHT SIGNALS

THE dip of the oars of the guard-boat could be distinctly heard in the pilot-house, and it was probable that the men in it could see the Teaser. But Christy was not much concerned about the situation, and he was not much disposed to give any attention to the boat.

"Stop her, or we will fire into you!" yelled the officer in charge of the guard-boat.

Even this menace did not induce the lieutenant to ring his bell to stop the engine. The boat was doubtless full of men, and as he could not give straight answers to all the questions that might be put to him, it might provoke a fight to attempt to do so, and he decided not to incur the risk. His prisoners might make trouble if he reduced the guard in charge of them, as he would be obliged to do to beat off the attack of the boat.

"What is this boat here for, Dave?" asked

Christy, as he peered through the gloom to obtain a glance at the craft.

"To keep the people at Fort Pickens from sending out any armed force," replied the intelligent contraband.

"Do they think a boat full of men could do that?"

"No, sir; but they could give the forts on the other side warning."

The sounds from the boat had come from the starboard bow of the steamer, and it looked as though the guard-boat had intercepted her by accident, since it was impossible that they could have seen the Teaser in the fog and gloom. As the steamer dashed ahead at full speed, the sound of the oars came from a point on the beam. But the boat seemed to be wasting her time, for nothing had been done since the threat to fire into the steamer.

"If a vessel is going to run out she has to satisfy this boat that she is all right," said Dave.

But he had hardly spoken before a volley of musket-balls passed over the Teaser; and perhaps the officer in the boat intended that they should pass over her. At any rate no harm was done by

them. Then a rocket darted from the boat up into the air, which could be dimly seen from the pilot-house.

"What steamer is that?" shouted a hoarse voice out of the gloom.

"The Teaser!" yelled Christy, with all the voice he could command.

The boat did not fire again; and if it had done so the steamer was out of its reach. But a minute later the boom of a great gun came across the bay. Fort Barrancas had evidently opened fire in response to the rocket, which had no doubt been sent up as a signal to notify the garrison that a vessel was going out or coming in, and that her movements were not regular. The first shot was followed by others, and a shot dropped into the water near the Teaser.

"Let the leadsmen sound, Beeks," said Christy. The order was repeated, and the reports were made known in the pilot-house. Sampson seemed to be testing the capacity of the engine, for he was doing his best in the matter of speed; but the Teaser behaved under the strain to which he subjected her as though she had been very strongly built.

"By the mark eight," chimed the leadsman on the port side.

That was water enough to float a seventy-four, and there was no let-up in the speed. In fact, it would not have been convenient to reduce the speed while the guard-boat could be at no great distance from the flying steamer. This was the report for the next mile at least, and Christy felt that the enemy was at a safe distance from him.

"And a half six!" shouted the port leadsman, with energy, as though he understood the effect his report would produce.

Christy rang to slow her down. The depth of water was the only directory he had in addition to the distance run, which was very indefinite without a knowledge of the speed of the vessel.

"By the mark six!" shouted the port leadsman, who was on the side nearest to the island of Santa Rosa.

This did not induce the pilot to take any further action, and the Teaser continued on her course at less than half speed. Christy looked at his watch by the light of the binnacle lamps. It was half-past eleven, and the Teaser appeared, as

well as he could calculate it, with the necessary allowances, to have made at least sixteen knots on the run from the sound channel.

"And a quarter five!" cried the leadsman of the land side.

Christy spoke to Sampson through the tube, and the result was a further reduction in the speed of the steamer. Beeks, who was at one side of the wheel while the lieutenant was at the other, seemed to be a little nervous as the depth diminished; and if he had spoken his thought, he would have expressed his surprise that his superior officer was running the steamer so near the shore, with the apparent intention of going still nearer.

"Mark under water three!" yelled the leadsman on the port side, while the one on the starboard gave "By the mark four."

"Shoaling fast," said Beeks.

"Yes; but as expected," replied Christy.

"Steamer, ahoy!" shouted a voice on the port side.

"On shore!" replied Christy promptly.

"What steamer is that?" demanded the shore speaker.

"The Teaser, prize to the United States ship Bellevite," answered the lieutenant.

"Boga-hobble-good!" continued the man on shore.

"Rabble-gabble-weed!" responded Christy.

"There's a Chinaman on shore there; but I am glad you speak his language," said Beeks, trying to repress his laughter.

"You are all right as to position!" shouted the islander.

"The guard-boat must be about a mile astern of me," added Christy.

"We will take care of that," replied the shore speaker.

Christy rang to stop the engine, which was done, though the steamer continued to go ahead under the impetus of her former headway. The leadsman on the port side reported two fathoms a little later, and then there was a ring to back her, for there could not be more than two foot of water under the keel. At this moment the peal of a twelve-pounder came from the shore, and a little later the bursting of a shell was heard astern of the Teaser.

Beeks was very much perplexed by the strange

speech which had passed between the lieutenant and the shore, and now by the discharge of the gun on the island; but he was a well-disciplined quartermaster, and he asked no questions.

"I don't think that boat will come any farther this way," said Christy, as a second report from the gun reached his ears.

"Then I suppose the shots we hear are directed at the boat," added Beeks.

"They can hardly be directed at anything out in that fog and darkness; but I don't think the guard will be willing to take the risk of a chance shell bursting near them," added Christy.

"On board the Teaser!" shouted a voice quite near the bow of the steamer.

"In the boat!" replied Christy. "Sound that bell slowly, Beeks, to let him know where we are."

The ripple of oars was presently heard, and a boat came out of the gloom, rowed by two soldiers, with an officer in the stern. It came up to the forward gangway, and the person in the stern climbed on board. The boat did not wait for him, but pulled directly back to the island.

"I am glad to see you, Captain Westover," said Christy, as the officer came into the pilot-house.

"And I am equally glad to see you, lieutenant," replied the captain. "You seem to have been successful in your undertaking?"

"Successful so far, and I think the worst of it is over now."

As soon as Beeks heard the name of Captain Westover, he understood all that had been dark before. Even the Chinese lingo must have been agreed upon. The army and the navy officer had been very busy in talking over something when they came in the boat from the Bellevite, and after they landed on the island. What they had been talking about was plain enough now.

Captain Westover had not much confidence in the expectations of the young naval officer when he expressed a hope that he might capture the Teaser; but he had promised to render all the assistance in his power. He had agreed to be on the shore of the island if the Teaser presented herself, and thus assure the lieutenant of his position on the bay. He had done more than this, for he had brought out a couple of guns and a section of artillerists to beat off the guard-boat if it interfered with the operations of the navy.

Christy had taken a course from the entrance of

the sound, half way between the island and Town Point, west-southwest. He knew that the distance was about four miles; but he could not know, except by sounding, when he came to the island, and he had bargained with the army officer to be on the lookout for him. Captain Westover had heard the noise of the Teaser, and had hailed her, thus assuring the lieutenant that his calculation had been correct, and that he was in the vicinity of Fort Pickens.

"I had no idea that you would accomplish anything, lieutenant," said Captain Westover.

"I found everything laid out just as I should have wished it to be," replied Christy. "We had plenty of information that the steamer would run out the first favorable night; and nothing could have been more favorable for blockade running than this fog and darkness."

"But nothing has been seen of this steamer from the fort."

"Where was she fitted out, Dave?" asked Christy, turning to the steward.

"Up by Emanuel Point, sir, about a mile above the town," replied Dave.

"Then she has not shown herself in the lower bay."

The conversation was interrupted by the roll of a drum on the shore.

"There you are, lieutenant," said the captain with a smile. "When you are ready to go ahead, don't wait on my account, for I will go on board of the ship."

"But what is the drum for?" asked the lieutenant, who was in the dark in his turn.

"I am not much of a sailor, lieutenant, but I have sent a drummer to follow the shore to the west end of the island, and you will know by the racket he makes where the island is, and how far off it is," replied the army officer.

"I am much obliged to you, Captain Westover; that will be a safe guide for me," said Christy, as he rang to go ahead.

He gave out the course west by north, and he thought he should be able to keep within hail of the island, though, as he could see nothing, it would be difficult to tell when he reached the northwest corner of it. If he continued on this course too long, he was likely to scrape acquaintance with Fort McRae, for there would be nothing in the soundings to indicate the approach to this dangerous neighbor.

Nothing more was heard of the guard-boat, though the section of artillery continued to discharge shells into the fog for a short time. On the other side of the bay Fort Barrancas kept up its fire at long intervals, and Fort Pickens could not reply without the danger of putting a shot into the Teaser after her recent reformation. The steamer kept on her course at half speed; but in ten minutes the sound of the drum fell astern of her, when the drummer could go no farther.

"Heave over the wheel, Beeks," said Christy.

Then he rang the bell to go ahead at full speed.

CHAPTER XXIII

ANOTHER NIGHT EXPEDITION

With the drum still beating on the shore, the Teaser rounded the northwestern point of the island, when the wheel was heaved over. Christy was entirely confident in regard to the navigation, for he had steered the Bellevite through the same channel when on an excursion a year before. But he had daylight and sunshine at that time instead of fog and gloom as on the present occasion.

"Buoy on the starboard, sir!" reported the leadsman on that side.

"Buoy on the port hand!" cried the man on the other side, a minute later.

"We are all right," added the lieutenant. "We are between the middle ground and the island. The buoy on the port is the southwest point of the island."

The Bellevite was not the only man-of-war that lay off Pensacola, for the Brooklyn and other ves-

sels were there to assist in the defence of Fort Pickens, which the enemy were determined to capture if possible. The government had done everything within its means to "hold the fort," though an army of about ten thousand men had been gathered in the vicinity to reduce it. The dry-dock which had floated near Warrenton, and which the Confederates intended to sink in the channel, had been burned, and a force of Unionists, including the Zouaves, called "The Pet Lambs," had been quartered on the island of Santa Rosa. It had looked for several days as though the enemy were preparing for a movement in retaliation for the destruction of the dry-dock, which was a bad set-back for them.

The getting to sea of the Teaser had no connection with this movement, it appeared afterwards, and if Lieutenant Passford's enterprise had been carried out only an hour or two later, he would have found the situation quite different. He had sent the most of Captain Folkner's force on board ashore, and had it all his own way afterwards. He was sorry to leave these men, and the rest of the ship's company of the Teaser, to assist in fighting the battles of the Confederacy, and he was

filled with the hope that they might yet be captured.

As soon as the Teaser was well to the southward of the island, Christy gave two short and a long blast on the steam whistle, which was the signal he had agreed to make when he approached the Bellevite, though Captain Breaker had laughed at him when he suggested that he might return in the prize. The same signal was made in reply, and repeated several times to aid him in finding the ship. The water was comparatively smooth, and the prize came alongside the Bellevite, where it was made fast.

The lieutenant's first duty was to report to the captain of the Bellevite, and taking Dave with him, he hastened on board. He found Captain Breaker on deck, for there was a feeling in the fleet and in the fort that some important event was about to transpire in the vicinity.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Passford," said he; and possibly it occurred to him that he had sent the young man on a difficult mission, practically within the enemy's lines. "You have brought the prize with you, I see; and I was before informed of the fact that you had her by the signal whistles."

"Yes, sir; the Teaser is alongside. She is not a vessel of the Confederate Navy, but was fitted out on private account. She is a privateer," replied Christy.

"So much the better that you have captured her," added the captain. "Did you have a severe fight, Mr. Passford?"

"We had no fight at all, sir. I was instructed to avoid a fight if possible, and I have done so. Not a blow has been struck or a shot fired, sir."

"I will hear your report in detail later, Mr. Passford, when the prize is in a better situation than now. Have you any prisoners?" asked Captain Breaker.

"Only the captain and the engineers, sir. This man with me is Dave, and he was a steward on board of the Teaser. He has given me valuable information, and I have not regarded him as a prisoner," replied the lieutenant.

"I understand," said the commander, with a smile, as he saw the yellow hue of the steward's face. "We will not regard him as a prisoner. But you may send the others on board."

Captain Folkner was in no better humor than before, and a berth in the steerage was assigned to

him. The other prisoners were sent on board, and Captain Breaker had ordered Christy to anchor the prize near the Bellevite.

"I don't feel as though I had quite finished my work," said Christy, as he walked towards the gangway to obey the order.

"What more is there to do?" asked the commander.

"It would take me a little time to tell the story of my trip into the bay, sir, and I think you would not understand what more is to be done until you have heard it," replied Christy.

"Then I will hear you before you anchor the Teaser," said the captain, leading the way to his cabin.

The lieutenant narrated the events of his trip across Santa Rosa Island. Captain Breaker was not a little amused at his scheme to get rid of the portion of the crew of the privateer before he captured her.

"I never suspected that you were the possessor of so much audacity, Christy," said he, when the lieutenant had put him in possession of all the facts.

"I did not know that I had more than my fair

share, sir, and I don't know what I have done that is at all audacious," replied Christy, very meekly.

"It is a very dark and foggy night, but I don't believe that I have another officer who would have cheek enough to pretend to be a pilot in Pensacola Bay, and to be in possession of the guard-boat at the same time."

"Captain Folkner put the idea into my head, and I think I should have been an idiot not to make use of it, considering the nature of my mission on board of the Teaser."

"It is a wonder that no one knew you were not Gilder."

"The men in the guard-boat did not expose me, and admitted by their silence that I was the person I claimed to be," replied Christy, with a twinkle of the eyes.

"Your scheme would have failed ninety-nine times out of a hundred."

"If it had failed, I had force enough to clean out the enemy on board, so that I ran no risk; but I was ordered to avoid a fight, and I did so," argued Christy.

"You were exceedingly fortunate; and the next

time you try such a trick, it may lead you into a rebel prison."

"It was not my fault that the ship's company of the Teaser were at issue among themselves, and I should have been an imbecile to fail to profit by it."

"I approve all you have done, Mr. Passford."

"Thank you, sir. Though I was of Captain Folkner's opinion that the sound was the best way out of the bay in the first place, I abandoned that view before I started on the expedition. I was sorry that I could not indorse Captain Folkner's opinion, and that I was obliged to take sides with his men," said Christy, chuckling.

"I understand your position perfectly. Now, what do you mean by finishing your work, Mr. Passford?" asked Captain Breaker, curiously. "We have the Teaser, and we ought to be satisfied with your brilliant success."

"I am not quite satisfied, sir."

"You ought to be."

"We put twelve men ashore at Town Point rather than have a fight with them; and I have the feeling that we have a mortgage on those men, to say nothing of thirty more at Pensacola who

were to join the Teaser. I told them they could get on board of their steamer from the island. I shall be sorry to disappoint them, for I suppose the whole forty or more are counting on a handsome allowance of prize money to be made for them by the Teaser. I should be sorry to disappoint them," continued Christy, chuckling all the time.

"Precisely so! I suppose you would be greatly grieved to blast their hopes, and you propose to take them on board of the steamer."

"That is the idea, sir. Taking a more patriotic view of the question, it would be a great pity to allow forty good sailors to waste their energies in the service of the Confederacy."

"Undoubtedly it would," said Captain Breaker, his brow knitting under his earnest thought. "What do you propose to do? Explain your plan fully, Mr. Passford."

"The principal of the malcontents on board of the Teaser was a man by the name of Lonley," Christy explained. "We left them at the point where the rest of the Teaser's crew were to join them. They are all anxious to get to sea in the Teaser, and I have no doubt they will come down to-night."

"I should think they would," the captain assented. "But they will expect to find the steamer in the sound, and not outside of the island. If the Teaser could get through the sound at all, she would not be where you intend to put her."

"I told Lonley to get upon the island, and be on the lookout for the Teaser; and as they have to come from Pensacola in a boat, it will be as easy for them to go to the island as to land at the point. Very likely they will get the Times to bring them off, or some other steamer," Christy argued.

"It is certainly very desirable to capture these men, for it will do so much to weaken the enemy; but I am afraid you are a little too audacious in some of your movements, Mr. Passford," replied Captain Breaker, with a softening smile.

"I beg you will not consider that I am asking for the command of the Teaser, Captain Breaker, if she is sent upon this duty," returned the lieutenant, somewhat set back at the prudence of the commander.

"I think I had better send Mr. Blowitt in command of the Teaser, and you shall go as his first officer," added the captain.

"I have no objection, even in my heart, to this arrangement," replied Christy.

"But I shall have to send the prize to New York, and I will appoint you prize-master," continued the captain, afraid that he was disappointing the ambitious young officer. "You have done exceedingly well, Christy, and I shall not fail to mention you favorably in my report; and you will write out yours as soon as possible."

Christy would not allow himself to think that he was unappreciated because an older officer was appointed to conduct the enterprise he suggested. He was ready to do his whole duty either as principal or subordinate. Mr. Blowitt was summoned from his stateroom, and forty men, including all who had taken part in the capture of the prize, were detailed to man the Teaser. The second lieutenant was one of the jolliest men on board, but he weighed nearly two hundred pounds, and he was not as active on this account in boat service as some others. He was an excellent officer, and had been in command of a steamer, though he had never before been in the navy.

At three o'clock in the morning the fasts of the Teaser were cast off, and she backed away from

the Bellevite. She was to proceed to a point about six miles to the eastward, which was beyond the camp of the "Pet Lambs." Here she was to look out for the Teaser's crew.

She had not made half this distance when all hands heard rapid and continued firing on Santa Rosa Island.

CHAPTER XXIV

LIEUTENANT PASSFORD ON A MISSION

The officers on board of the Teaser could not explain the occasion of the firing on the island, though it sounded as though an engagement of some sort was in progress. It had been foggy during the preceding day, and if any movement on the part of the enemy had been indicated it could not have been seen on board of the ships off the entrance to the bay.

"I hope this business we are to do this morning will not take us long," said Mr. Blowitt. "We may be wanted on board, and I should not like to be absent from the Bellevite if she is to take part in an engagement of any kind."

"And I am sure I should not," added Christy. "I should not be surprised if the enemy made an attempt to capture Pickens; but even if they storm it in the darkness, I do not see that the ships can do anything until they are able to see what they are to do."

"But this affair may keep us away from the ship for a day or two," suggested the second lieutenant.

"I don't think so, sir; I believe you will be on board again before seven bells in the morning watch," replied Christy. "The ship's company of the Teaser were to be somewhere on the shores of the sound where they could be taken on board."

"But the men you landed at the point believed that the Teaser was to get out through the sound," replied Mr. Blowitt. "They took you for the pilot Gilder, and you did not tell them that you intended to run the blockade."

"Of course I did not; if I had, they would have remained on board. But the guard-boat attempted to stop us, and the artillery on the island fired into it, though it is probable that they did not hit it in the dense fog," Christy explained. "Our men may have learned from the guard-boat that we took the steamer out through the main channel."

"If they did they probably learned that the Teaser went out with the assistance of the garrison at the fort," suggested Mr. Blowitt.

"I am confident that the officer of the guard-

boat would have no means of knowing that fact," argued Christy. "Of course, he heard the firing in the neighborhood of the fort, and he would naturally conclude that they were firing upon the steamer to prevent her from running out."

"That may be; but, to tell you the truth, Mr. Passford, I am afraid we shall not find these men," added the second lieutenant. "From the firing we hear, I should judge that a movement of some kind is in progress, and our men may be better informed than you expect."

"Of course, they may be; but I expect to find these men at some point along the shore," replied Christy, who thought the second lieutenant was just a little obstinate in not accepting his theory in full.

The steamer continued on her course to the eastward, and nothing more passed between the two principal officers in regard to the crew from Pensacola. But Flint was quite as confident as the third lieutenant that the forty men, more or less, would be captured. The noise of the firing could no longer be heard, and then Christy suggested that the whistle be sounded as a signal to the men if they were in the vicinity.

The depth of water was three or four fathoms close up to this part of the island. The soundings indicated that the steamer was as near as it was prudent to go in the dense fog. Christy was sure that the privateer's crew could not have gone any farther to the eastward by this time, and the screw was stopped, while all hands made an anxious use of their ears to detect any sounds that came from the shore. But nothing could be heard at first, and Mr. Blowitt again intimated that they were engaged in a "wild-goose chase." But he had hardly uttered this cooling reflection before Beeks came aft to report that a number of pistol shots, as he thought they were, had been heard in the distance.

"Nobody can tell what they mean," said the sceptical Mr. Blowitt. "They may be a part of the affair we heard going on soon after we left the ship."

"In what direction were the shots, Beeks?" asked Christy.

"They sounded as though they were about half a mile or less to the westward of us," replied the quartermaster.

"Blow the whistle in short blasts, Beeks,"

added Mr. Blowitt, who seemed to have gathered a little faith from the report of the quartermaster.

The order was obeyed, and Beeks again reported that pistol shots had been heard from the westward. The third lieutenant was in a hurry to have the business finished, for he felt confident that the Bellevite would soon be engaged in an affair of more importance than picking up a couple of score of prisoners. He ordered the steamer to come about, and move to the westward; but after she had been under way about five minutes, he rang to stop her, and then sounded the whistles again. Several pistol shots responded to this signal. Again he started the screw, and pointed the bow of the Teaser squarely to the north.

The steamer moved very slowly, and two men sounded all the time till they reported "by the mark two," when there could not have been more than three feet of water under the keel of the vessel. The screw was stopped and backed so that she might not run upon any shoal place ahead of her, and the officers waited with interest and anxiety for further action on the part of the party on shore. By this time no one doubted that there were men on this part of the island; but whether

they were the crew of the privateer or not was yet to be proved.

"Steamer, ahoy!" shouted some one on the shore.

"On the island!" replied Christy, as he was instructed to do by his superior.

"What steamer is that?" demanded the speaker on the island.

Whoever he was, he could not help knowing that a steamer was there, for the engineer had begun to blow off steam as soon as the screw stopped, though neither party could see the other in the fog and darkness.

"The Teaser," replied Christy. "Who are you?"

"We are the ship's company of the Teaser, and we want to get on board," replied the speaker. "Is Captain Folkner on board?"

"He is on board — of the Bellevite," the third lieutenant would have finished the sentence if he had told the whole truth, for he uttered only the first part of the sentence.

"All right. The first and second lieutenants are with us. Is Gilder on board?"

"He is; and he wants to get back to the other

side of the island," answered Christy, who considered it his duty to make his replies as suitable to the occasion as possible. "Who is speaking?"

"Lieutenant Lonley," replied the man; and Christy knew him, though he did not know his rank before. "He wants to see Gilder before he goes on board. Tell him to come on shore in his canoe."

"What is that for?" demanded Christy, rather surprised at the unexpected request.

"I want to see him on particular business; I have a message for him, which I cannot deliver in presence of any other person," replied Lonley.

"All right; you shall see him soon," answered Christy.

"Get out the boats to take us on board," continued Lonley. "Send them about a mile to the eastward, where we have left our bags."

"All right," repeated Christy.

But he said what he did not believe, for everything did not look right to him. He could not understand why the bags of the men should be a mile to the eastward. He could not imagine what business Lonley could have with Gilder or his rep-

resentative; and if he had any, why it should be necessary to meet him on the island.

"Of course you don't expect me to carry on the programme that fellow has marked out," said Mr. Blowitt. "I don't quite like the looks of the things that we can't see, Mr. Passford."

"Neither do I, Mr. Blowitt," replied the third lieutenant frankly.

"I shall not send a boat from the steamer till I understand this matter a great deal better than I do now, and especially I shall not send the boats a mile to the eastward," added the second lieutenant.

"Of course it is possible that my plan has miscarried already," added Christy.

"I shall do everything I can to carry out your plan, as I am instructed to do by the captain; but I have the feeling, in spite of myself, that we are crawling into a hornet's nest," added Mr. Blowitt, with some anxiety in his tones. "You will call all hands quietly, and be ready to repel boarders. It is well to be prepared for whatever may come. The firing at the west end of the island indicated that something was going on, and perhaps these men on the shore know about it."

Christy obeyed the order promptly, and the next minute, every seaman on board was ready with his cutlass and revolver to meet an attack. But no sound came from the shore just then, and the officers were in a state of uncertainty in regard to the situation which allowed them to do nothing. They waited for half an hour, when the leadsman reported that the water was shoaling, which indicated that the Teaser was drifting towards the island.

"On board the Teaser!" shouted Lonley, so distinctly that he could hardly have been more than three hundred feet from the steamer.

"On shore," replied Christy, prompted by Mr. Blowitt.

"I am waiting for Gilder! Why don't he come on shore?" shouted Lonley, his impatience apparent in his tones.

"Where are all the men?" demanded Christy, as requested by the second lieutenant.

"They have gone a mile to the eastward where they left their bags."

"We will run down in the steamer for them," added Mr. Blowitt, talking through Christy.

"Don't do that!" protested the speaker on

shore. "There is a Yankee steamer off in that direction. We heard her steam an hour ago."

"All right!" replied Christy.

"That settles the matter in my mind," said Mr. Blowitt. "They are trying to play what they call a Yankee trick upon us. When we send our boats to the eastward, we shall send them into a trap. If the boats are to bring off forty men, they will expect them to go with only men enough to pull the oars; and when they get possession of them, they expect to retake the Teaser."

"I think you are right, Mr. Blowitt," replied Christy, who began to believe that his scheme was rapidly approaching a failure, though he did not give it up just yet.

"This Lonley is still on the shore near us," said Mr. Blowitt. "I should very much like to know what has been going on to-night on the island, and it may be that he knows all about it. As you are the representative of Gilder, Mr. Passford, you may take the canoe that is astern, and have a talk with Lonley at close quarters, if you don't object."

"I should have proposed it myself if I had not feared that the idea would be charged to my

audacity," replied Christy. "I will take only Flint with me, as he was with me before."

The canoe was brought up to the gangway, and Flint took his place at the oars. Mr. Blowitt charged the young officer in the most serious manner not to run any risks, and the boat was shoved off. It required but a few strokes of the oars to bring it into shoal water by the beach. Only a single man could be seen on the shore, and this one must be Lonley. There seemed to be no risk, and Christy landed.

CHAPTER XXV

CHRISTY BECOMES A VICTIM

EVERYTHING was perfectly still on the island, and only a single man was in sight; but Christy put his hand upon his revolver as he went on shore. Though he had never been a fighting young man, he had the impression that he should not tamely submit to the assault of an enemy, or run away from any single man that stood up in front of him. He had always been prudent, even while he had been daring, and he hardly needed the solemn admonition of the second lieutenant to be extremely cautious.

"Is that you, Captain Gilder?" asked the man on the shore, who stood a little way from the waterside.

"Yes; and I take it for granted that you are Lonley," replied Christy, advancing towards the other. "You have done all the talking this night, and I ought to know you."

"All the talking except what you have done, and I ought to know you," replied Lonley. "I am Lieutenant Lonley, of the Teaser, and our men are all ready to go on board."

"And Captain Folkner is all ready to have them go on board," returned Christy, who had no doubt of the truth of what he said, though he understood that he was telling a "story" all the same.

"I have no doubt he is. But I don't quite understand how you happen to be on this side of the island, and so far to the westward at this time in the morning. We expected to find the Teaser burrowing through the sound, and we had about made up our minds to take possession of her and run the blockade, as other Christians do. We did not believe she would get through the sound in a week, if she ever did."

"I succeeded in persuading Captain Folkner that he had better come out by the main channel; and that is the way we did come out, and that explains how we happen to be here at this time in the morning," replied Christy, very cheerfully.

"You must have very strong powers of persuasion, Captain Gilder," said Lonley, laughing.

"I have in a case such as this was," added the

lieutenant, with a chuckle, as he thought of the particular kind of persuasion he had used upon the captain of the privateer.

"I would give a good deal if I had just such powers, for they are sometimes of very great service to an officer."

"You are quite right, Mr. Lonley. I suppose you are the first lieutenant of the Teaser."

"No, I am not; kissing goes by favor, and the captain's brother is the first; and he is no more fit for his position than the captain is for his duty. I was in hope that the government would take possession of the steamer, and send her to sea properly officered," added Lonley, very good-naturedly.

"Good officers are quite necessary in the service," suggested Christy. "I have no doubt you will fill the bill, and be all that could be possibly desired."

"Thank you, Captain Gilder. Did you have any trouble in getting out of the bay?"

"No, none at all. By the way, Mr. Lonley, we have been hearing firing at the west end of the island to-night. Do you know what it means?"

"The first thing was to clean out that regiment

of Zouaves; and I have no doubt that has been done before now; and our boys may get a hack at Pickens. A big force was landed in the fog, and the Yankees will not stay on this island much longer," replied Lonley.

His information was entirely correct, though his prediction was not equally reliable.

"I was sure there was fighting going on over there," added Christy. "You seem to be all alone, Mr. Lonley. Where are all your men?"

"I told you before you came ashore that I had sent them all over to the place where they had left their bags, about a mile to the eastward of us. I suppose Captain Folkner has sent the boats over there for them before this time?"

"He was inclined to run over in the steamer," added Christy.

"I hope he did not do that," said the privateersman, with a good deal more energy than the other thought the occasion warranted. "I warned you that there was a Yankee gunboat over that way."

"The Teaser has not gone over that way," replied Christy.

"If she has, she will be gobbled up by that gunboat, and all my men with her."

"I persuaded Captain Folkner not to do it," added the Bellevite's officer, very quietly.

"He ought to have done just what I asked him to do; and that was to send his boats over to the place named for the men."

"And I persuaded him to do that also," continued Christy, as unblushingly as though he had not been strictly in the habit of telling the truth all his lifetime.

"Good for you, Captain Gilder!" exclaimed Lonley, grasping the hand of his companion as though he had been his brother. "You beat all the men I ever knew on power of persuasion; and when I get the command of the Teaser, as I expect to have before this year ends, I shall want you to serve as my first lieutenant."

"Thank you, Lieutenant Lonley; you are very kind; and if I ever go into the privateering service, I shall certainly go in with you," replied Christy.

"An officer with your power of persuasion will be invaluable to me," replied Lonley, still holding the hand of the other. "If I were gifted in this respect as you are, Captain Gilder, do you know what I would do?"

"I am sure I have not the least idea, unless it would be to persuade Jeff Davis to send you a commission as a captain in the regular navy," said Christy, laughing at the idea.

"I am afraid I should have too little cheek to attempt to do that, for the president is a rather obstinate man, and I fear he would not see the point. Besides, I am a very modest man, though you may not have observed this shining trait in my character. No; I am too diffident to ask for a place I have not won by service."

"Then what would you do in the way of persuasion?" asked Christy, though he wondered why he was prolonging the interview.

"I should use my powers of persuasion upon you, Captain Gilder, in the first place."

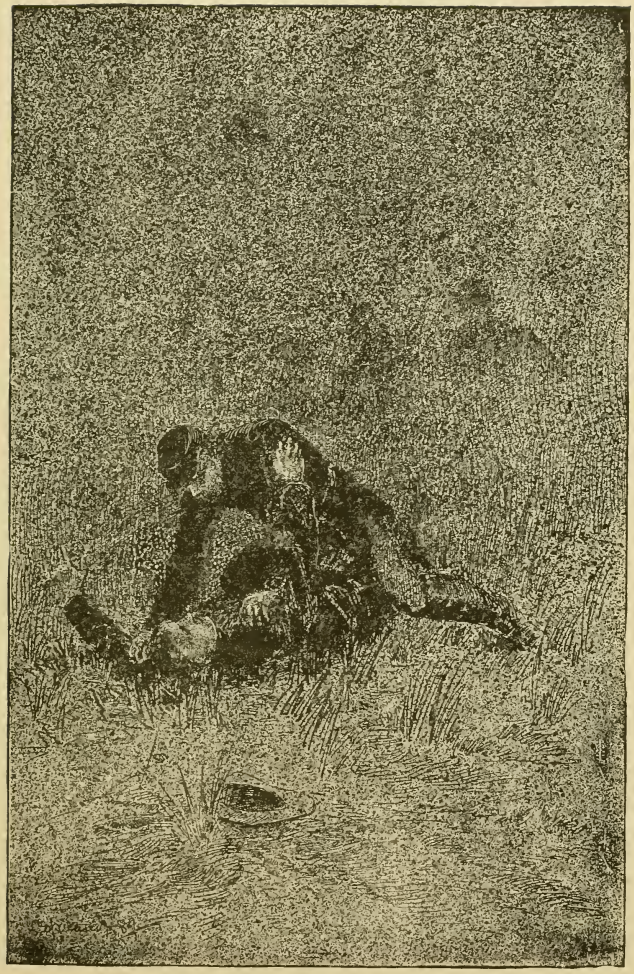
"I don't think it would be of any use, for I am too well posted in that way of doing it to be influenced," replied Christy, trying to withdraw his hand from the grasp of the privateersman. "I must go on board of the Teaser again when you have delivered your message to me, as that was what you wished to see me for."

"I did say I had a message for you, didn't I? Well, upon my life, I have quite forgot what it

was, but it was from President Jefferson Davis, and he was particular that I should deliver it to you to-night or this morning. Isn't it very strange that I should forget a message of so much importance that it could not be trusted to writing?"

"Passing strange, I should say," answered Christy, who began to understand that he had fallen into a trap of some sort. "While you are thinking of it, I will go on board, and persuade Captain Folkner not to run the Teaser to the eastward if he should take it into his head to do so. I had no idea there was a Yankee gunboat in that direction, and I don't believe the captain had. Besides, he don't know where he is in this fog, and he needs me."

As he spoke, Christy tried to withdraw his hand from the grasp of Lonley, as he had not succeeded in doing before when he tried. But the privateersman suddenly fell upon him, and both of them went down. A tremendous struggle followed, but before it was decided, two men rushed out of the gloom, and took part in the affair; and they soon settled the matter in favor of the Confederacy, much to the chagrin of the second lieutenant of the Bellevite.



"A TREMENDOUS STRUGGLE FOLLOWED." — Page 284.

Flint had remained in the canoe, which had been partly drawn up on the beach; but the moment he sprang out upon the sand to go to the assistance of his officer, he was set upon by two men and secured. Both of them were deprived of their weapons, and their hands tied behind them. Beyond a doubt the lieutenant and the master's mate were prisoners before they had any clear idea of the situation.

"Are you there, Mr. Folkner?" called Lonley, as soon as the prisoners were secured, speaking now in an energetic tone, as he had not before.

"I am here," replied a man who seemed to be in a boat not far from the spot. "You have kept me a long time waiting for you!"

"I wanted to give the Yankee boats time to get at least a mile from the Teaser before anything was done. Shove off now, and make things as lively as you can," said Lonley. "Go to your places in the boats," he continued to four men who had assisted in the capture of the two officers.

By this time Christy had a chance to see that he was a victim of a trick which was to eventuate in the recapture of the Teaser; and he was sorry that

he was not the only victim, as he looked at Flint. He realized too that the scheme had been very well planned, though he was really happy in the belief that it would be a failure in the end. Lonley seemed to be the leading spirit in the affair, and managed the details. He had intended that the boats should be sent from the Teaser to a point at least a mile off.

He had taken it for granted that the steamer would come to pick them up, or in other words, to capture the forty prisoners. If he was weak in accepting as the truth Christy's statement that the boats had been actually sent away, as desired, he could see no reason why the Yankee officer should try to deceive him. It appeared now that the privateersmen had two boats, which had been brought across the island for the purpose. Lonley had naturally wished that only a few men should be on board, and concluded that it would be an easy matter to capture the steamer, and then to secure the men in the boats when they returned from the eastward.

The four men on shore, who had been put in a place where they could assist Lonley, hastened to the boats, and they shoved off, pulling as silently

as though the oars had been muffled, as probably they had been. In a moment more they disappeared in the darkness and fog.

"I think I have improved a great deal in the art of persuasion," said Lonley, as the boats disappeared. "I suppose I persuaded you as effectually as you did Captain Folkner."

"You have done very well, Mr. Lonley," replied Christy, in a patronizing tone, for he was determined that his companion should derive no satisfaction from seeing him cast down by his misfortune.

"You informed me a little while ago that Captain Folkner was on board of the Teaser; and I wish to ask if you are uniformly in the habit of speaking the truth?" continued Lonley.

"Well, that depends upon circumstances. If I have not done so, you cannot expect me to contradict myself."

"You claimed that you were Captain Gilder."

"Hardly, my excellent friend: when Captain Folkner addressed me by that name, I did not object to it."

"That was just as much a lie as though you had claimed it in so many words," protested Lonley.

"I admit it; and I hardly expect a true patriot to tell the truth to the enemy. If I remember rightly, you told me yourself that your men had gone to the eastward where they had left their bags. I don't believe that your conscience reproached you when they showed themselves in the boats."

At this moment pistol shots were heard on the water.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ACTION ON THE DECK OF THE TEASER

As the Teaser was but a short distance from the shore, Christy had no doubt that the attempt to board her had been made by this time. Mr. Blowitt had quite as many men on board of the steamer as could have been contained in the two boats, and he was not much concerned about the result of the attack, especially as he knew that the second lieutenant was fully prepared and on the lookout for it. The only thing that Christy regretted was that he was not on board of the Teaser to take part in the affair of repelling boarders.

"There seems to be some music in the air," said Lonley, after he had listened for a few moments to the sounds that came from the direction of the steamer.

"To return to the subject of the morality of telling stories, your men do not seem to be a mile

to the eastward, where their bags were left," added Christy good-naturedly.

"You had a glance at them in the boats, though the darkness and fog were rather too thick for you to count them," replied Lonley, chuckling over the deception he had practised upon the lieutenant of the Bellevite.

"Yes, I saw them; and I concluded that they could not be where their bags were."

"All is fair in war."

"That seems to be the generally received maxim, and he is the smartest man who the most thoroughly deceives the enemy," added Christy, who found himself tolerably well satisfied with the situation, though he was a prisoner.

"That is so, and of course I can find no fault with you for deceiving me," returned Lonley, chuckling as though he was even better satisfied with the situation than his companion.

"Thank you, Mr. Lonley, you are magnanimous, and with equal sincerity I can say that I have no fault to find with you," replied the Union officer. "But I have my doubts whether, after this, either of us will be likely to believe what the other says. But, for my part, I wish to say that

I don't believe in telling anything but necessary and patriotic lies."

"That is my view of the matter exactly; and if there is any man that despises a liar, I am that man," said Lonley warmly. "But it seems to me they are making a good deal of a racket off there," he added, as the noise of pistol shots and the clash of cutlasses came over the smooth waters of the gulf.

"They seem to be at it quite earnestly," replied Christy.

"By the way, how many men did you leave on board of the Teaser?" asked the privateersman, whose manner seemed to have suddenly become considerably changed.

"How many men?" repeated the lieutenant of the Bellevite.

"That is the question I asked," replied the lieutenant of the Teaser.

"I suppose you would not believe me if I should tell you," answered Christy.

"I judge that you can speak the truth if you try," added Lonley, with more asperity than the occasion seemed to require.

"I know that I could," said Christy, very

decidedly; "and I may add that I was in the habit of doing so on all occasions before this cruel war began."

"Then suppose you try to do so just now, and tell me how many men your people had on board of the Teaser."

"You must excuse me for the present, for I do not like to make statements to one who will not believe what I say," answered Christy, rather facetiously.

"You are a prisoner now."

"I am painfully aware of the fact; but I doubt if the government service will suffer very much in my absence from duty."

"You are too modest by half, Mr. — but I have not even the pleasure of knowing your name, and conversation is annoying under such circumstances."

"I am simply Midshipman Passford, at your service."

"Only a midshipman!" exclaimed Lonley. "Upon my word, you ought to be a commodore. Passford? Possibly you are a cousin of Colonel Passford of Glenfield."

"Colonel Passford is my uncle. Do you know him?" asked Christy.

"I do know him; and there is not a finer man or a truer patriot in the South than Colonel Passford. He is loading a schooner with cotton, and he offered me the command of it. Then you are his nephew, I have heard of you."

"I hope my uncle is quite well, for I have not heard from him for several weeks, or since I left New York."

"I saw him ten days ago, and he was very well then. I am very happy to have made a prisoner of his enterprising nephew, who appears to be capable of doing our cause a great deal of mischief," replied Lonley, looking earnestly in the direction of the Teaser.

"Thank you, Mr. Lonley; I certainly intend to do it all the mischief I can in a legitimate way. I am speaking the truth now," said Christy.

"But you have not answered my question in regard to the number of men on board of the Teaser when you left her."

"And you will excuse me for the present if I do not answer it," added the Union lieutenant.

"Very well, Mr. Passford; I cannot compel you to answer it, though doing so would do no harm to

your cause, for I should judge that the question of the hour is settled."

"What is the question of the hour, Mr. Lonley?"

"The question is which side is in possession of the Teaser, yours or mine," replied the privateersman, still gazing out into the gloom.

"Is that question settled?" asked Christy, with interest.

"Of course I don't know, but I should think that it was. We hear no more pistol shots and no more clashing of cutlasses," replied Lonley, uneasily. "But I expected to hear the triumphal shout of our men when they had carried the deck of the Teaser."

"I have not heard anything like a triumphal shout," added Christy, very quietly. "It is barely possible that your men have not carried the deck of the Teaser."

"Of course, it is possible they have not; but I don't believe they have failed," replied Lonley.

The privateersman listened for a few minutes in silence. He appeared to be entirely confident that the victory must be with his men. He evidently believed that the captors of the Teaser had sent

her two boats off to a distance of a mile, and thus weakened whatever force she had on board of her. He did not seem to have any idea that the party he had met in Pensacola Bay had been increased in numbers, or that the officer in command had reported to the ship to which they belonged. Christy realized what Lonley was thinking about, and he clearly believed that the Teaser had been left in charge of not more than a dozen or fifteen men, reduced by at least six then on boat duty.

"Help! help!" shouted a man in the water at no great distance from the shore.

"What does that mean?" said Lonley, springing to his feet.

"It is a call for help, and, as my hands are tied behind me, I cannot respond to it, as I would gladly do, be the man who needs it friend or enemy," replied Christy. "There is the canoe in which we came ashore, Lieutenant Lonley, and you can use that."

The privateersman sprang into the boat, shoved it off, and pulled in the direction from which the appeal came. He disappeared in the fog in a moment; but a little later was seen again approaching the shore. He had not taken the sufferer into

the boat, but he had clung to it. As he got upon his feet, Christy saw that there were two of them, for one helped the other up the beach.

"What does this mean?" demanded Lonley, very much excited. "Have you run away from the others?"

"No, sir; but we were beaten in the fight, our boats captured, and all hands taken prisoners except us two," replied the uninjured of the two men.

Lieutenant Lonley, whatever his views of the morality of lying to the enemy, uttered an exclamation which grated very harshly on the ears of Lieutenant Passford. The result, as stated by the man who had swum to the shore, was as unwelcome as it was unexpected. He had not deemed a defeat even possible. He learned from the guard-boat that the steamer had been captured. He had spent the time after he was landed with his companions at Town Point, and organized his force for the recapture of the Teaser. The failure of the final attack was as severe upon him as the loss of his vessel had been upon Captain Folkner.

"Who are you?" demanded Lonley, when he had

in some measure recovered from the shock which the failure gave him.

"I am Levick, the boatswain; and this is Lieutenant Folkner, who was wounded in the shoulder in the first of it," replied the man. "He was knocked from the rail into the water when we boarded, and he held on to an oar. When the fight was over, and we had lost it, I slipped into the water, and helped the lieutenant along on his oar, till I was about used up, and then I called for help."

"Are you much hurt, Mr. Folkner?" asked Lonley of the injured officer.

"I don't know; my shoulder feels numb, and I can't use my arm," replied Folkner. "But I can use my legs, and I think that is what we had better be doing."

"I don't understand it," protested Lonley, very much dissatisfied with the result of the action, as may well be supposed. "I was sure you would carry her deck at once."

"I was as sure as you were, Lonley; but I believe they had fifty men all ready for us. They let us leap on deck without much opposition, and then they surrounded us, and took us by surprise,

for I did not suppose, after what you said, that they had a dozen men," replied the wounded lieutenant.

"I did not suppose they had even a dozen men left on board," Lonley explained, with humiliation in his tones.

"I staid in the boat till I had seen all my men on deck," continued Mr. Folkner. "They surrounded our force, and tumbled them into the hold as though they had been pigs, slashing them with their cutlasses if they tried to get out. I saw the fat officer in command of the enemy; he was very active, and I leaped on deck, determined to cross weapons with him. But he hit me in the shoulder with his cutlass, and I lost my hold on the rail."

"You ought to have led your men, not followed them," said Lonley bitterly.

"That is easy enough for you to say; but I wanted to be where I could see my men," retorted the first lieutenant, of whom the second had a very mean opinion, perhaps because he got his position on account of being the captain's brother.

"Whether I did right or not, I can tell you all one thing; and that is, that we shall be prisoners if

we stay here any longer. They have got our men under the hatches, and they have ordered out a boat to look for an officer they sent ashore."

"We can do nothing here, and we may as well put ourselves in safer quarters, for we have two prisoners to lose," said Lonley. "Mr. Passford, I shall have to trouble you to march to the other side of the island."

"I am your prisoner, Mr. Lonley, and I must obey your orders, though I am sorry to be away from my ship in the hour of victory," replied Christy submissively.

But he felt that his plan had been fully carried out.

CHAPTER XXVII

A VISIT FROM COLONEL HOMER PASSFORD

With his arms securely tied behind him, Christy realized that he could make no resistance to his captors. Flint was in the same unfortunate situation, and both of them had been deprived of their revolvers. But in spite of his unpleasant surroundings, the young lieutenant felt that the balance of advantage was on the side of the Union. If the government was deprived of the services of a midshipman and a master's mate, a dangerous privateer had been captured, and about forty prisoners had been taken from the employ of the Confederacy. In the face of this decided gain, Christy felt that he had no right to complain.

By this time the light of day had begun to have some effect on the darkness and fog, though the gloom seemed to be hardly less. Lonley directed his two prisoners to walk side by side behind the wounded lieutenant, while he and Levick took

their places in the rear. The second lieutenant of the Teaser was duly impressed by what the first had said about a probable visit to the island in search of the missing midshipman, and he directed Folkner to march as rapidly as he could. He took the control of the party out of the hands of his superior, and very likely he wished he had done so sooner.

Folkner, as he had before suggested, still had the use of his legs, and he certainly used them well, for he travelled like a man who was in a hurry; but both Christy and Flint were in excellent condition, though they had been on active duty all night, and they had no difficulty in keeping up with their leader.

Lonley and Levick were both armed, and they kept their weapons in readiness for immediate use, for the former recognized the enterprising character of the young officer in front of him, and knew that he would escape if he could. But Christy did not feel called to take any desperate chances in order to restore himself at once to the service of his country, and he and his companion in captivity marched along very quietly. The two armed men soon dropped several paces to the rear, so that the

lieutenant could listen to the details of the action on the deck of the Teaser. The prisoners could not hear what was said, and they started a conversation on their own account.

"We are in a bad box," said Flint. "I did not expect to come out of the little end of the horn in this way."

"You must take a broader view of the situation than that," replied Christy. "The Teaser is certainly a prize of the Bellevite, with as many as forty prisoners. That is the result of our night's work, though we are counted out just now in the business of crowing over the success of our side. That is the way to look at it; and this view makes me quite satisfied with the night's work."

"I did not see it in that light, and I suppose you are right, Mr. Passford," replied Flint.

"And you will not lose your share of the prize-money for the Yazoo or the Teaser," added Christy, though, as the son of a millionnaire, he felt no interest at all in the spoils of war.

"What do you suppose will be done with us, sir?" asked the master's mate.

"I have not the least idea, any more than you have; but I have no doubt we shall be kept in

close confinement, and I don't believe we shall live as well in our prison, wherever it may be, as we do on board of the Bellevite. But I am rather fond of johnny-cake, and I don't expect to starve on bacon."

"Don't you think it was a mistake to send us ashore in the canoe on the part of Mr. Blowitt?" asked Flint, rather timidly.

"If it was, it was as much my mistake as it was his. But I don't think it was a mistake. I cannot say that we did not succeed in the action on the deck of the steamer because we were sent ashore," replied Christy.

"I don't see how that can be," replied Flint.

"In the first place, Lonley wanted me to come on shore, and asked that I should do so. On the strength of what I said to him, he believed that our boats had been sent to the eastward, and that induced him to make the advance he did. After he had told us where to find the men, he had good reason to believe that the boats would be sent for them. We did not fall into the trap he set for us. I think it is all right as it is; but whether it is or not, it's no use to grumble about it."

"I did not mean to grumble; and I am willing

to believe that everything has been for the best," replied Flint, apparently resolved to be satisfied, as his superior officer was, whether he felt so or not.

Folkner led the way in a northwesterly direction, and evidently knew where he was going. When they had been marching about half an hour, the party heard the report of fire-arms in the rear of them; but the discharges were at regular intervals, and did not sound as though they came from a battle. A little later, they heard loud shouts.

"That is the party who are out in search of us," said Christy.

"That is so, Mr. Passford; the sounds are only signals, and they are intended to notify you that your friends are in search of you," added Lonley, hastening up to the advance of the party. "I should be very sorry to do such a thing, but if you shout, or do anything to inform that party where you are, it will be my duty to shoot you."

"I am not disposed to be rash, Mr. Lonley. If our friends overtake your party, it will not be my fault," replied Christy.

"You do not expect me to shoot you in that case, I hope?" added the privateersman.

"I did not know but that your revolver might go off by accident."

"You may be assured that it will not; I claim to be a gentleman and a Christian, and I intend to be fair even to my enemies."

"I beg your pardon for my thoughtless remark. I have no occasion to complain of you. I shall endeavor to be a gentleman and a Christian also, though I intend to do my best in fighting my country's battles; and I am not disposed to talk politics with you under present circumstances."

The march was continued for some time longer, and the signals in the rear were repeated till increasing light enabled the prisoners to see that they were approaching Pensacola Bay. Not a little to their astonishment, the shore seemed to be alive with soldiers, and they learned that a battle, or something like one, had been fought on the island. The Confederate forces had been sent to attack Wilson's Zouaves, in camp to the eastward of the fort. Some very severe fighting had been done in the darkness and fog, with heavy losses on both sides.

The Zouaves had been re-enforced from the fort, and with marines from the ships. Though the

Confederates claimed the victory, it was clear enough to the two prisoners from the south side of the island that the Southern troops were retreating from the field. A soldier who fought with them wrote to a paper in Georgia: "I scarcely know whether we achieved a victory, or suffered a defeat." He also said that in the fog and darkness: "We shot down our friends in numbers."

A few prisoners had been captured by the enemy, including two officers. But Folkner led the way to a point on the bay not very near the steamers which had brought over the expedition from the mainland. The Confederate troops embarked in the steamers and launches by which they had come; but the Union troops followed them to the end. Their steamers were aground, and a merciless fire was poured into them by the pursuing companies.

"They are having hot work of it over there," said Lonley, as they came to a boat on the shore. "But that is not our affair, and it is quite proper for us to keep out of the way of the flying bullets."

Christy and Flint were directed to take seats in the boat, and the lieutenant and boatswain manned

the oars. They were not out of the reach of the bullets of the Federal troops, and the oarsmen pulled with all their might for a time. It was five miles to Pensacola, but the privateersmen landed their prisoners there. They were committed to a sort of guard-house; but in the afternoon they were sent to Mobile with about twenty others, who had been captured in the battle of the night before.

There was not a great number of prisoners in the city, and it was intended to remove them to other quarters arranged for their accommodation.

Christy and Flint were confined in an unoccupied warehouse, and were fed tolerably well, and they were supplied with some kind of dried grass for beds. It was not at all like the luxurious stateroom of the lieutenant on board of the Bellevite, or even the quarters of Flint; but they were determined to make the best of it. Flint had become reconciled to his situation, and Christy was even cheerful.

After he had been in the warehouse a few days, Christy was not a little surprised to receive a visit from his uncle, Colonel Passford. He was not surprised at the kindness of the planter in making

the visit, but that he should know so soon that he was a prisoner of war, for he had fully decided not to make any appeal to his uncle; and he could not imagine how he had discovered his situation.

"I am glad to see you, Christy," said Colonel Passford, extending his hand, which Christy took without any hesitation.

"And I suppose you are glad to see me here," added the nephew, with a smile.

"While I am glad to see you deprived of the power to injure the cause I love, and to which I have pledged all that I have and all that I am, I am sorry that you should be in trouble, Christy. I hope I have Christian feeling enough to keep me from rejoicing at the misfortunes of any person, and especially of my brother's son. I can say sincerely that I am sorry you are in trouble," said the colonel solemnly.

"Oh, I am not in trouble, Uncle Homer!" exclaimed Christy, laughing. "I have done my duty to my country, my conscience is clean, and I am not to be upset by an accident like this. I am really happy in the consciousness that I have been faithful to the cause of my country."

"I wish you had been; but we will not talk

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about that, for I suppose you and your father have the same views," replied the planter, looking very sad.

"I don't believe we should agree if we talked about it for a year, and we had better give the subject the go-by. But how are Aunt Lydia and Gerty?"

"Both are very well. I hope your father is in good health, as well as your mother and sister."

"All very well."

"I have not heard a word from any of you for about five months," continued Colonel Passford. "In fact, not since you were here in May."

"We got home all right, and the Bellevite is a man-of-war now. She captured one valuable prize off the coast of Carolina, and another at Pensacola," replied Christy cheerfully.

"She ought never to have been allowed to leave Mobile Bay," added the colonel.

"Your people certainly did everything they could to prevent her from leaving, and I hope you don't blame yourselves for letting her go. What about Corny, sir?" asked Christy.

"Major Pierson was very much to blame for permitting the Bellevite to pass the forts when she

came in, and he lost his command. But he has devoted all his life to redeem his fault by her recapture. He took Corny with him, and a naval officer; I only know that the attempt to recapture her failed from the fact that the Bellevite is now on the blockade."

Finding that his uncle knew nothing of the events which had transpired at Bonnydale, Christy told him all about them, informing him at the end that Corny was a prisoner of war on parole at his father's house, recovering from his wound.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN ENTERPRISE FOR A DARK NIGHT

"CORNY wounded!" exclaimed Colonel Passford, rising with no little emotion from the box on which he had seated himself.

"Not seriously, Uncle Homer," added Christy.

"But how was he wounded? I have heard of no battle in the vicinity of New York till now, though our papers contain some news from outside," continued the planter.

"It was hardly a battle," replied Christy. "Captain Carboneer had brought a crew for a steamer through Canada, I believe, for the purpose of capturing the Bellevite as she lay at Bonnydale. Major Pierson and Corny were to assist him; and the major wished Captain Carboneer to take Florry on board of her, and convey her to the South, when he had taken possession of the steamer; but the naval officer was too high-toned to do anything of the kind."

"I did not suppose Major Pierson could do such a thing," added the planter, biting his lips.

"But the major insisted that he did not mean to take her against her own will. Captain Carboneer bought an old steamer, put his men on board of her, and started up the river to make the capture. I knew they were coming, and was ready for them. We fired only one shot at the old steamer, which smashed her walking-beam, and disabled her. A piece of the machinery struck Corny, and injured him in the shoulder. The doctor says he is not permanently injured, though it will be months before he is able to use his arm. He was paroled, and mother is taking as good care of him as though I had been wounded."

"I am thankful it is not worse," added the colonel, with a sigh of relief. "What became of Major Pierson?"

"I don't know, but I suppose he is a prisoner in Fort Lafayette. He refused to give his parole when he found he could not be a guest at Bonnydale. Captain Carboneer obtained the command of a steamer, but it was captured by the Bellevite, and probably he is with the major in the fort."

The planter asked a great many questions in

regard to the affair on the Hudson, and Christy answered them. He gave some of the particulars of the capture of the Teaser, and mentioned the name of Lonley, who had told him that Colonel Passford had offered him the command of a schooner he had loaded with cotton to run the blockade; but the planter said nothing to indicate that he had ever heard of the privateersman.

"The Bellevite has been very fortunate so far, and she seems to have a charmed existence," added the colonel.

"That is only because she is well handled," replied Christy, laughing.

"And you seem to be equally fortunate, Christy, for you have twice been the means of saving your father's steamer. Corny has done nothing, is wounded, and practically a prisoner. But, Christy, the tide will turn, for Heaven is always on the side of a just cause," added the planter solemnly.

"I believe it, uncle; and that will be the reason why the Union will prevail in the end. Besides, Napoleon believed that Heaven was always on the side of the stronger battalions."

"That was an impious remark; and Heaven, by its own mysterious ways, will conduct the just

cause of the South to a successful ending, and the Confederate States of America will be an honored member of the family of nations."

"I think we had better not talk politics, even though we mix in a little religion," suggested Christy.

"As your father has been kind to my boy, wounded and a prisoner in the midst of enemies, I ought to do something for you, Christy," continued Colonel Passford, looking on the floor.

"Not at all, Uncle Homer; I am not wounded as Corny is, and there is no need of doing anything for me," interposed Christy, laughing in the serious face of the planter.

"I can get you paroled, and then I shall be glad to have you remain at Glenfield until you are exchanged," said the planter.

"I shall not accept a parole, Uncle Homer," replied Christy promptly.

"Not accept a parole!" exclaimed the colonel. "Corny did so."

"If I were wounded, as Corny is, I would accept it."

"I hope you don't mean to try to escape, Christy," added his uncle, with a look of deep

concern on his dignified face, as he looked about the apartment in which his nephew was confined.

"I don't say that I shall; if I did say so, you would have our guard doubled, and ready to shoot me if they saw my head at a window," answered Christy with earnestness.

"You seem to think I am a heathen; but you forget that you are an active enemy of my country," added the planter, with a pained expression.

"I don't forget it, uncle; but I am not half as active as I hope to be before this thing ends. I believe you would see me shot or hung by the neck till I was dead if it were for the benefit of what you call your country."

"I hope and pray that I may never be placed in a situation to see anything of that kind."

"I know you are earnest, honest, and sincere, Uncle Homer, and no partiality to your own kindred would permit you to shirk what you consider to be your duty. I find no fault with you; and I believe my father would be equally firm," said Christy warmly.

"I think you understand me, my boy; but do not attempt any rash project. I cannot prevent the guard from shooting you if you attempt to escape."

"I prefer to keep my own counsels in a matter of this kind, Uncle Homer. Give my love to Aunt Lydia and Gerty, for I suppose I am not likely to see them, as I am liable to be sent away any day."

"Oh, yes, you will see them, for they shall call upon you here as soon as they return from Montgomery, where they have gone for a few days."

"It will be very kind of them to do so," added Christy, though he did not believe he should be "at home" when they came.

"I do not wish you were wounded, my dear boy, but if you were, we would do all that your father and mother are doing for poor Corny," replied Colonel Passford fervently. "Now, promise me, Christy, that you will not attempt to escape."

"I can't make any promises, uncle."

"I will do the best I can to have your condition improved, and see that you have a better diet, if I send your food from a hotel."

"You are very kind, uncle, and I know that you will do all that your duty will permit you to do for me."

"But I shall live in fear and trembling if I leave you without your promise to refrain from daring exploits. Just consider, my dear boy; you

are in the fourth story of this warehouse, and the guard-room is below you. You have really no chance at all of success, and a fall or a shot may kill or disable you for life."

"I do not say that I shall try to escape, uncle."

"And you do not say that you will not try to escape."

For half an hour longer Colonel Passford endeavored to induce his nephew to give the desired promise; but he remained obstinate to the end; and his uncle was compelled to leave him, to enter upon the fear and trembling in which he was to live while his enterprising nephew remained a prisoner. But he promised to call upon him every day, and to write to his wife and daughter to return at once.

"I think I shall not wait for him to call," said Christy to Flint, as soon as he had gone.

"Do you expect to get out of this place, Mr. Passford?" asked the master's mate, with lively interest.

"This very night!" replied Christy, in an energetic whisper, as he put his finger on his lips to indicate that nothing more was to be said on the subject.

The second lieutenant of the Bellevite had not been confined in the warehouse three days without considering his chances of escape, and the means of accomplishing such a purpose. He had looked the building over with the greatest care. The room the prisoners occupied was next to the roof. The rear windows opened upon a narrow alley, and he had ascertained by looking out at them that the warehouse was one of a long block. He had been in Mobile a great deal while the family were visiting at Glenfield, and he had been careful to notice the location when he was conducted to it with the others.

At the end of the loft next to the main street were thirty or forty other prisoners, with whom Christy and Flint had been on good terms, though they belonged to the army, and seemed to be inclined to keep by themselves. They had been exhausted by hard service, and they had nothing to do but eat and sleep, though the former occupation did not occupy any great amount of their spare time. But as soon as it was fairly dark, they stretched themselves on their beds of vines and weeds, and most of them were soon asleep.

The evening that followed the day on which

Colonel Passford visited his nephew was dark, foggy, rainy, and as gloomy as even a blockade runner might ask. Christy seated himself under one of the rear windows of the loft, which appeared to have been intended only for storage, and was only from seven to eight feet between studs. Flint placed himself at the side of his companion, as he was requested to do.

"This is just the kind of a night we want," said Christy, in a whisper, for he could hear the tramp of a sentinel outside the door of the loft.

"I should as soon think of getting out if we were buried a hundred feet under ground as to think of getting out of this place," replied Flint, who was hardly as enterprising as his officer, though he was always ready to follow when he was well led. "There is a guard at the door, Mr. Passford."

"He may stay there; we don't want anything of him," replied Christy.

"I see no other way out of this den, unless we jump down into the street; but I will follow you, sir, if I fall a hundred feet in doing it," protested the master's mate.

"You shall not fall six inches, and you will

have no opportunity to do so. But if you are all ready to follow my lead, we may as well begin at once," added Christy, who had expected that it would require some persuasion to induce his companion to join him.

The first thing the midshipman did was to take off his shoes, and to require Flint to do the same. With these in their hands, Christy paced off twenty steps, which brought him, according to a calculation he had made in the daylight, under a scuttle that led to the roof of the warehouse. Stationing the master's mate as a mark, he laid off five paces at right angles with the first line from the party-wall. It was as dark as Egypt, and the scuttle could not be seen; but the operator had located it mathematically, and was confident as to its position. Flint was planted under the opening, with the shoes of both at his side.

The master's mate was nearly six feet in his stocking feet as he stood, and Christy whispered to him the next thing in his scheme. With the aid of his willing assistant, the midshipman was mounted on the shoulders of the former, where he stood up like an athlete in the gloom, though he almost instantly obtained a hold above with his

hands. He unfastened the scuttle, and slid it off the aperture with the greatest care. Then he drew himself up with his strong hands, and was on the roof. Then Flint passed up the shoes, as he reached down for them. Seating himself on one side of the frame, he braced his feet against the other side, and grasped the hands of the mate. It did not work.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE NEW MATE OF THE COTTON SCHOONER

CHRISTY had given himself credit for more physical strength, or Flint for less weight, than the circumstances warranted, and found that he could not draw up his companion as he intended. He made several efforts to accomplish his purpose, but he failed every time. The fear of making a noise cramped his efforts to some extent.

"Let go, Mr. Passford," whispered Flint, when he realized that his avoirdupois was too much for the young officer. "I will get that box, and then I can manage it myself."

"All right; but don't make a particle of noise," added Christy.

It required some time for the mate to find the box in the darkness, but he had it in position at last, standing upon one end. Mounting it, he found that his head was on a level with the roof, and he could easily draw himself up; but he did not do so at once.

"What are you waiting for, Flint?" asked Christy, rather impatiently.

"If I leave the box where it is, the guard will see where we have gone when they inspect the prison at ten o'clock," replied Flint.

"That's so; I did not have the box in my plan, and that would tell the guard where to look for us," replied Christy. "We must make a line, and haul it up after you."

"Here are two big handkerchiefs," added Flint, as he removed his neck-cloth, and passed up his pocket handkerchief with it.

Christy tied the handkerchiefs together with great care, adding two more of his own to the length, which he thought would reach the box. Flint made it fast to the broken end of a board on the side, and then, without the least difficulty or noise, sprang lightly to the roof of the warehouse. With the aid of his companion, Christy drew up the box, careful that it should not strike against the frame of the scuttle. The door was closed, though of course they were unable to hook it on the inside, as they had found it; but the guard were not likely to notice that it was not fastened before morning.

"What next, Mr. Passford?" asked the master's mate, after they had rested for a few minutes from their labors, though they had not been very arduous.

"The next thing is to get down into the street, where we shall be as safe as though we were as patriotic, over the left, as my Uncle Homer. The burden of the work is done; but I hope we shall be able to kill two birds with one stone," replied Christy, though his meaning was mysterious to his companion.

"It don't seem to me that we are much better off than we were in the loft," suggested the mate.

"I believe we are, though I don't think we had better indulge in any long speeches just now. We have a favorable night, and we must make the best of it. I don't intend to be seen in this town in the morning, but we have the whole night before us."

"There will be a lively time looking for us to-morrow, for I don't think they will be willing that you should get off, though it won't make much difference to them about me."

"They would not be willing to part with you, my friend."

"But you made yourself rather noted in helping the Bellevite out last May, and they will have a history of the loss of the Teaser in the newspapers in due time, if they have not had it already; and they will not like it a bit when they find that you have stepped out."

"They are welcome to their own reflections," replied the lieutenant.

"And they will send a searching party out to your uncle's estate at Glenfield; but of course we shall not go near there," said Flint.

"That is just where I am going," replied Christy, decidedly, "for that is where I expect to kill one of the birds with the stone I fire. But we had better be moving, for we have a long tramp before us."

The midshipman led the way, and though the roof, which was nearly flat, was wet with the falling rain, they walked, still in their stockinged feet, to the farther end of the block. Neither of them wore his uniform, as they remained as they had dressed for the duty they were to do on board of the Teaser. This was a point in their favor in the course they were to pursue, for their uniform would have betrayed them as soon as they were seen.

Before they reached the end of the block of warehouses, they had found and tried all the scuttles on the roof, but they had not discovered one which had been left unfastened. At the last one this became a serious question. The scuttle at the end warehouse was securely hooked on the inside; but neither of the pair felt discouraged at this circumstance. Looking about them they found a piece of joist about ten feet long, which might have been left there when the building was finished. Christy examined the scuttle with the greatest care, to determine on which side the hooks were placed.

While he was doing this, Flint detached a couple of bricks from the party-wall, which were used as a fulcrum for the lever, made of the joist. The building was not inhabited, and there was little to be feared at that height above the street from any noise they might make. Flint sat down on the end of the lever, and the scuttle flew up at once, the staple drawn out of the wood.

The master's mate was the first to enter; and he "hung off" to the floor below. Then he assisted Christy to descend, and to close the scuttle after him. Acting upon their belief that all the ware-

houses were constructed on the same plan, they easily found the door by which they reached the staircase. On the lower floor, they opened a window and passed out into the alley in the rear of the building. They were on the ground, and Christy soon ascertained where he was. He made his way to a wharf where he was fortunate enough to find a boat.

This locality seemed to be entirely deserted, and there was no one to challenge them, and no one appeared to take any notice of them on the way. It was not yet nine o'clock, and many stores were open, one of which they entered and bought a cooked ham and a large supply of bread. The woman in charge asked no questions, though Christy talked about a fishing trip to blind her. The boat they found was a very good one, and as it was the property of the enemy, Christy had no scruples in regard to confiscating it. He had money enough in his pocket to pay for it, but as the owner did not appear to dispute his taking possession of it, he dispensed with this ceremony.

Taking the oars which they found in the boat, they pulled away from the wharf without interruption from any source. Christy took his bear-

ings as well as he could, and they passed out into the fog and darkness, to which experience within a few days had accustomed them both. They crossed the Alabama River, and then followed the land to the southward. Striking across an inlet they reached the land again, and by midnight they reached a point of land where Christy felt entirely at home. He recognized it by the dilapidated wharf, from which he had embarked in the Leopard.

It was still a long pull to Glenfield, and they went ashore to partake of a little refreshment. Flint was a smoker, and he had some dry matches which enabled them to make a fire, more for its light than its heat. The ham was good and so was the bread to hungry men like the fugitives. At the end of an hour by the midshipman's watch, they felt like new men, and they resumed their places in the boat, and pulled two hours longer, which brought them to the inlet at Glenfield. At the rude pier where the Bellevite had been moored lay a topsail schooner.

"I don't find any fault, Mr. Passford, but it seems to me that it is rather dangerous for you to come here," said Flint, in a low tone, as soon as

they had made out the schooner at the wharf. "I can't see what you are to make by it; and your uncle would hand you over to the rebel officers as readily as he would eat his breakfast."

"I have no doubt he would do so; but I don't intend to give him the chance to do so," replied Christy, resting on his oar. "You see this schooner. She is loaded with cotton, and she is going to run the blockade about this time. I intend to take passage in her."

"Then you knew about this vessel?" asked Flint curiously.

"I did; and that is the particular reason why I came here. Lonley told me that my uncle had offered him the command of the schooner; and now that he has lost his position on board of the Teaser, I have no doubt he has already applied for the berth that was offered to him. I am confident that he has seen my uncle, and it must have been he who told him that I was a prisoner."

"I begin to understand you now, Mr. Passford," added Flint.

"If you do, we will say no more about it just now, for there may be some one within earshot of us," replied Christy.

Nothing more was said, and the boat cautiously approached the schooner. No one appeared to be on board of her, and the fugitives found that she was loaded with cotton, even carrying a deck-load of this staple of the South, the price of which had bounded up to an enormous figure in the markets of the world. In the early morning the clouds and the fog were swept away, and the sun came out. Christy found a hiding-place on the other side of the creek, in a dense mass of bushes, where the boat was drawn out of the water.

A spot which commanded a full view of the schooner had been selected, the boat was turned upside down so as to afford a shelter, and the weary Unionists went to sleep, for they were not likely to be disturbed on this side of the creek. It was noon when they woke, and it looked as though something was going on at the vessel. About half a dozen negroes were to be seen on the deck-load of cotton; and a little later in the day, Colonel Passford and Lonley were observed talking together. But nothing was done that day, and the night came on. Christy was not satisfied with his information, and as soon as it was dark, the boat was launched, and the fugitives pulled over to the schooner.

"Who's in dat boat?" shouted a negro, showing himself at the rail of the vessel.

"I am," replied Christy, rather indefinitely.

"Be you de new mate, sar?" demanded the man.

"I am," answered Christy, at a venture.

"We done wait free days for you, an' Massa Lonley be mighty glad to see you."

"Where is Captain Lonley now?" asked the lieutenant.

"Stoppin' wid Massa colonel. He done tole me to call him if de mate come. Dis nigger gwine to do dat," added the man.

"Stop a little," added Christy, as he climbed on board of the vessel, followed by Flint. "How many men have you on board?"

"Six men wid de cook."

"Are these men sailors?"

"Dey all done work aboard a vessel, but dey ain't much sailors."

"All free niggers?"

"No, sar; wish dey was."

"Where are the rest of the men?"

"In de fo'castle, sar. De capin specks de mate come to-night, an' I reckon we's gwine down de bay right off den."

"Go and call the captain then," added Christy, as confidently as though he had stood on his own ground.

The negro hastened away as fast as his legs would carry him, and in a few minutes Colonel Passford and Captain Lonley came on board. The latter seemed to be hung on wires, he was so active; and even before he saluted the new mate, he called all hands and directed them to hoist the mainsail.

"I am glad to see you, Fetters," said the captain, extending his hand to him. "I expected you yesterday."

"My business was such that I could not leave," replied Christy.

It was very dark, and the captain did not recognize him.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PRIZE-MASTER OF THE JUDITH

THE weather had been clear all day, with quite a fresh breeze, and the same conditions prevailed after dark. Colonel Passford seemed to have a great deal to say to Captain Lonley, now that the time for sailing had come, and he occupied the attention of the latter so that neither of them could observe the new mate, if he were disposed to do so. As soon as Christy perceived the *rôle* which circumstances had laid out for him, he put his hand into a slush-tub he found in the waist, and anointed his face with the filthy stuff. There was just color enough in the compound of grease and dirt to change his complexion, if it had been light enough to observe his physiognomy. Flint did the same thing.

"You will have to take your chances when you come to the entrance of the bay," said Colonel Passford, nervously. "This cargo is worth a for-

tune, and we are in sore need of the supplies which its value will purchase for us."

"I think I understand the matter perfectly, colonel," replied Lonley, who did not seem to take kindly to any advice from a landsman.

"Do not take any unnecessary risks, Captain Lonley, for more than the value of the cotton is at stake," continued the planter.

"I have a plan of my own which I am confident will take me through the blockade all right," added the captain.

"You must remember that my brother's steamer is on the blockade, and that she makes over twenty knots an hour."

"I shall pretend to be a prize of the Bellevite long enough to distract the attention of the fleet," added Lonley, impatiently.

"I don't understand these things, and I shall leave you to manage the affair as you think best; but I beg you will use all proper caution," continued Colonel Passford. "Here are the ship's papers. You will give the one on the top to the officer from the fort, and he will cause you no delay."

Lonley took the papers, and thrust them into

his pocket without any reply. Christy had taken charge of the hoisting of the mainsail without waiting for any special orders, and Flint was doing his best to assist him. The negroes, though not expert seamen, knew the ropes of a schooner, and they did very well with Flint in their midst.

"We are going to have a fresh breeze, Fetters," said Captain Lonley, as the new mate came near him.

"It looks like it now," added Christy, changing his voice as much as he could, and as he had done before when he spoke to the captain.

"If things are not favorable when you get to the forts, I think you had better anchor inside of the point," suggested the planter, who could not be blamed for being deeply interested in the fate of his cotton, and the fortune which was locked up in it.

"Of course, I shall have to do that if necessary; but I don't like to do that, for every blockader will watch her all the time if I do," replied Captain Lonley, still maintaining his respectful demeanor, though it seemed to be hard work.

By this time the mainsail was set, and was banging in the lively breeze. The negro sailors seemed

to have become weary with wasting the day in the sailing of the schooner, and they worked with a good deal of enthusiasm.

"Now set the foresail, Fetters. I don't think we can carry the topsails," said the captain. "Isn't that a white man with the hands?" asked he, as the men went to the foremast.

"That's a man I brought along with me," replied Christy. "He is an able seaman, and he is very anxious to get to some port outside where he can obtain a berth as mate."

"All right; I thought the work was going on exceedingly well, and his presence explains it," added the captain.

"He owns the boat in which we came over here, and I think we had better hoist it on deck," said the mate.

"All right; do so, Fetters. I suppose you have nothing on your hands?"

"Nothing very particular," replied Christy.

"I am instructed to buy a fast steamer if I can find one, even if I have to go to England to obtain her. What do you say to taking the berth of first officer in her, Fetters, for I know that you are a sailor, and that you have pluck enough to fire a gun?"

"Such a position would suit me first rate," replied Christy, with proper enthusiasm.

Still Lonley did not recognize his voice, and he took especial pains that he should not. But this state of things could not long continue. If the Unionist went into the cabin where there was a light, he could not help betraying himself. It was necessary to provide against this or any similar emergency very soon. He had already arranged his plan, and it was his purpose to carry it into execution as soon as the vessel was fully clear of the creek.

The boat was hoisted on the deck; the fore and main sail were set, and everything was in readiness for a departure. Colonel Passford, after repeating some of his admonition to the captain, shook hands with him, and stepped down upon the wharf. Lonley gave the order to stand by the jib, and cast off the fasts. The two principal sails filled on the starboard tack, the jib went up in the twinkling of an eye under the direction of Flint, and the schooner began to gather headway. The captain was at the helm, for he would trust no other there, and Christy went forward.

"Set the fore topmast staysail," said the mate;

but he was willing the crew should execute the order in their own way, for he called the master's mate to him. "The biggest job is yet to be done," he added, in a low tone.

"What is that?" asked Flint.

"To get possession of the vessel," replied Christy, impressively.

"That will be an easy matter, with nothing but niggers on board," added Flint.

They talked together for a few minutes, and the plan was arranged. Flint saw that the fore topmast staysail was properly set and trimmed. The two Unionists on board did not even know the name of the schooner, but she gathered headway as she approached the mouth of the creek, and went along at a very satisfactory rate. The mate of the vessel and his fellow fugitive then went aft to be ready for the decisive action in which they were to engage. But they had hardly reached the quarter-deck before the schooner was hailed by a boat.

"Schooner, ahoy! On board the Judith!" shouted a man.

"In the boat!" replied the captain. "Who's there?"

"Fetters!" responded the boatman.

"Fetters!" exclaimed Captain Lonley, apparently bewildered by the reply. "It seems to me that Fetterses are plenty to-night."

But this was all he was permitted to say, for the stroke of a handspike, in the hands of Flint, fell upon his head at this instant, and he dropped upon the quarter-deck like a log. At the same moment, Christy sprang to the wheel, and the schooner was not allowed to broach to. She dashed on her course, increasing her speed every moment, without heeding the boat that had hailed her. In the darkness, the genuine Fetters, as doubtless he was in the boat, could not have seen in what manner Captain Lonley had been disposed of, and all the crew were forward, so that they were no wiser.

"Judith, ahoy!" repeated the genuine and only true Fetters, at the top of his lungs, as the schooner hurried off on her course. "I am Fetters, the mate!"

"All right!" replied Christy. "I will see you in the morning. Come on board at six o'clock."

Mr. Fetters said no more, and probably he concluded that the Judith had gone to get firewood

for the galley, to fill her water-casks, or for some similar purpose. The fictitious Mr. Fetters kept his place at the wheel. The binnacle had been lighted by the cook, and he knew the exact course for the entrance to the bay. He felt that he was in possession of the Judith and her valuable cargo; and he had become so hardened in his patriotic duty that he felt no compunction of conscience because the vessel and cotton had been wrested from his uncle.

As Colonel Passford had not scrupled to attempt to capture the magnificent steamer of his own brother, it would be a poor rule that would not work both ways. Besides, the proceeds of the sale of the cargo were to be expended in the purchase of supplies, and a steamer to carry them, for the use of the Confederacy. His uncle, from his elevated standpoint of duty, would have an opportunity to consider the application of his stringent views on the other side of the question.

"I hope he is not dead," said Christy, as Flint bent over the prostrate form of the captain.

"I don't know; but I am going to take him below, and lock him up in his stateroom, where the crew will not see him," replied Flint.

"That is right; and I would help you if I could leave the wheel long enough," replied Christy.

"I can handle him alone; but see that none of the sailors come aft while I am about it," added the master's mate, as he dragged the form to the companion-way.

In such a work as he had on his hands, he had the strength of two men. Without any great difficulty, he dragged the body to the cabin, and then into one of the two staterooms he found, which was lighted. It was a more difficult task, for Lonley was a heavy man, but he placed the form in the berth. His first duty was to examine very carefully the pockets of the captain. He secured the file of papers first, and then drew a large naval revolver from each of his hip pockets. Then he took his papers from his pocket-book, but left his money, watch, and other valuables where he found them.

After a careful examination of the insensible form, he was satisfied that he was not dead, though he might yet die from the blow he had received. He locked the door of the room, and went on deck. He gave one of the revolvers to Christy, and

retained the other, handing over to him also all the papers he had taken.

"This is the biggest venture we have undertaken yet," said Flint, as he seated himself by Christy.

"But everything has gone well so far," replied the lieutenant. "If you are not promoted for this and the Teaser affair, Flint, it shall not be for the want of any recommendation on my part."

"Thank you, Mr. Passford; you are very kind. I hope your services will be recognized in the same manner," returned the master's mate.

"I don't care so much for myself, and I should not cry if I were never to become anything more than a midshipman."

"All I have done has been to obey your orders, and follow your lead; and if anybody is promoted for the two affairs in which we have been engaged, you are surely the one who is entitled to it."

"Well, we will do our duty, whether we are promoted or not," added Christy.

It was not more than nine o'clock in the evening when the Judith came out of the creek, and in about four hours she was approaching Fort Morgan. She was still within the enemy's lines,

and her acting captain was disposed to do everything in a regular manner, especially as he had the means of doing so. He had not the same risk to run in getting through the blockading fleet that Captain Lonley would have had, and he promptly decided to take his chances without waiting for a dark and foggy night. A boat came off from the inner side of the fort, and Christy ordered Flint to bring her to.

The permit to pass the forts was in due form, and signed by the proper officials. The officer in the boat examined it carefully by the light of a lantern, and declared that he was satisfied with it. Then he asked some questions, which the acting commander of the Judith answered. The toughest inquiry he made was as to how he expected to get through the blockaders in a clear night like that. Christy assured him that he had a plan which he was confident would carry him through without difficulty.

The schooner filled away again, and passed through the main channel; and in another hour she was in the midst of the Union fleet. There was a rattling of drums, a hissing of steam, and energetic commands heard as soon as the Judith

was made out in the darkness, and doubtless a vision of prize-money flitted through the brains of officers and seamen. But Christy soon impaired the vividness of these fancies by ordering the fore-sail of the schooner to be taken in, and then the fore topmast staysail. The expectant ships' companies were not willing to believe that the vessel had come out for the purpose of surrendering.

"Schooner, ahoy!" shouted the officer of a boat sent off by the nearest blockader. "What vessel is that?"

"The Judith, prize to the United States steamer Bellevite," replied Christy, "Kindly inform me where the Bellevite lies."

In another half-hour, Christy had dropped his anchor a cable's length from the Bellevite. Instructing Flint to ascertain the condition of Lonley, the lieutenant went on board of her to make his report, using the boat they had captured at Mobile, pulled by two of the negroes.

"I have come on board, Captain Breaker," said Christy, as he met the commander, who had come on deck at the alarm.

"I see you have," replied the captain, grasping him by the hand. "I have been terribly worried about you, Christy."

"I am all right, sir; and so is Mr. Flint, who was with me. We have brought off a schooner of two hundred tons, loaded with cotton," continued Christy, as modestly as the circumstances would permit.

"I am very anxious to hear your report, Mr. Passford," said the commander.

"Excuse me, sir, but the captain of that schooner is badly wounded, and needs Dr. Linscott as soon as possible."

The surgeon was sent on board of the Judith. As Paul Vapoor caught a sight of the returned third lieutenant, he hugged him as though he had been separated from him for years instead of a few days. His welcome was quite as cordial, though not as demonstrative, from the rest of the officers. Then he went to the cabin with the captain, where he reported all that had transpired since he had been separated from his companions on board of the Teaser. He was warmly commended for his bravery and skill, and Captain Breaker assured him that he should be remembered in the reports to the department.

Captain Lonley was conveyed on board of the Bellevite, where he was committed to the sick bay.

He had recovered his senses, but it was likely, the surgeon said, that it would be a month before his health was restored. The Teaser had not yet been sent away; but the next day the third lieutenant was appointed prize-master of the steamer, and Flint of the schooner, for he had been the master of a coaster, and was competent for the position.

A considerable crew was put on board of the Teaser, and both vessels were sent to New York instead of Key West. The steamer was expected to tow the Judith when necessary, and defend her if she was attacked. But both arrived at their destination without any mishap, and both were condemned; the Teaser was purchased by the government, for she was likely to be a very useful vessel on account of her speed and light draught.

Christy had a brief leave of absence after he had served as a witness against the captured vessels. He had seen his father, mother, and sister on his arrival, and they were as proud of him as though he had been made a rear-admiral. Captain Breaker had written to his father of his disappearance on Santa Rosa Island, and had no doubt he had been made a prisoner within the enemy's lines. Christy brought the news of his escape

himself, which made him even doubly welcome at Bonnydale. Certainly the young lieutenant had never been so happy before in his life.

Captain Passford was a man of great influence, though he held no position in authority. At the first opportunity he obtained to talk with him, Christy made a strong plea in favor of the promotion of Flint. The late owner of the Bellevite knew him well. The master's mate had been a schoolmaster, and was very well educated; but he had a taste for the sea. He had made several foreign voyages, and had bought a schooner then, of which he went as master. But he had sold his vessel to great advantage, and, having nothing to do, he shipped as third officer of the Bellevite.

Sampson, who had come home as chief engineer of the Teaser, was also remembered by Christy, who interceded for his promotion, or rather appointment. The government promptly obtained possession from the court of the prize-steamer, and the repairs and alterations upon her were begun at once. She had proved herself to be a fast sailer, and had logged sixteen knots, so that much was expected of her.

Captain Passford, after his son had pleaded so

earnestly for the promotion of the master's mate and the fireman, asked Christy what he expected in the way of promotion for himself. The young officer did not ask for any promotion; he was abundantly satisfied with his present rank, and he rather preferred to retain it. His father laughed, and declared that he was very glad of it, for he had some delicacy in asking favors for a member of his own family.

Corny still remained at the house of his uncle; and he was as thoroughbred a rebel as his father, though he said next to nothing about his "cause." At a later period both he and Major Pierson were duly exchanged; but the gallant officer had come to the conclusion that Miss Florry Passford was very far from being infatuated with him.

As the Bronx, which was the name given to the Teaser at the suggestion of Captain Passford, was to be ready about as soon as the legal proceedings would permit of the departure of the officers and seamen of the Bellevite, they were ordered to return to their ship in her. Flint's commission as a master, and Sampson's as an assistant engineer, were received. Christy's companion in the night expeditions had not expected to be anything more

than a midshipman, and he was immeasurably delighted at his good fortune. Then it appeared that other influences than that of Captain Passford had been employed, for Christy, almost in spite of himself, was promoted to the rank of master, his commission antedating that of Flint.

Mr. Blowitt was appointed to the command of the Bronx, with Master Passford as first lieutenant, and Master Flint as second; and Christy was to take her to the Gulf. She was to be used at the discretion of the flag officer after she had delivered her passengers on board of the Bellevite, and received her new commander.

The Bronx was soon ready for sea with her new ship's company, and sailed for her destination, where Christy was to make some further inquiries into operations ON THE BLOCKADE.

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